
Johnnie Kelly

By WILBUR S. BOYER

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JOHNNIE KELLY

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BY

WILBUR S. BOYER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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JOHNNIE KELLY



CHAPTER I

MAKING FRIENDS

UP from Johnnie Kelly's desk, directly in front of the teacher, a horse-fly shot with an angry buzz. Mr. Parks, thirty years of age and with ten years of experience in the city schools, was bent over his roll-book making crosses; and as he had neglected, veteran-like, to take the attendance for a week, he was too engrossed to note the instant galvanization of every boy and girl in the 7 B class.

Dangling below the fly on a thread was a paper man as big as a Red Cross button. From yellow-haired Max Schuler, aged eleven, to shaven-headed Victor Caluchie, sixteen, all eyes were on that fly — all except those of Johnnie Kelly. He was studying the circular metal top of his inkwell for its artistic possibilities.

Books lay open on the desks, "Evangeline" forgotten. She could have chased Gabriel to Berlin, for all 7 B cared. Forty heads moved in unison as that big fly went two laps around the room, dragged the tiny man over a chandelier,

circumnavigated the globe on top of the book-closet, and settled upon the dusty bust of Abraham Lincoln. He explored the martyr President's face, the paper figure, with outstretched arms and legs, scraping off the dust until Lincoln resembled a coal-heaver at the close of a hot July day.

A smothered chorus of snickers evidenced that the effect was appreciated; but Mr. Parks still crossed on.

Up the horse-fly soared again toward the front of the room and circled over the unwitting pedagogue's head, while the class watched with bated breath and happy faces. In a graceful curve, that fly settled upon the teacher's inkstand, and the man at the end of the thread, leaning wearily against the inkwell, appealed to Mr. Parks. The teacher jumped in his seat and stared at the figure. There was no doubting whom it was meant to represent, even had it not carried a tennis-racket in one hand and in the other a satchel marked, "D. P. — P. S. 199, Man" — for the teacher's characteristics were well accentuated: stocky build, broad shoulders, square jaw, and curly black hair.

Teacher made a pass at it, and the class giggled. The fly darted up, wheeled about, and landed on the map of North America behind Mr. Parks's desk. From Newfoundland to Salt Lake City he

traveled, D. P. twirling along on a parallel several degrees nearer the tropics. Stealthily Mr. Parks rose, roll-book in hand, murder in his eye. As Master Fly, traveling south, crossed the Grand Cañon, came one swift swat of the roll-book — and there was a new city in Arizona.

A titter rippled over the class. The instructor spun around, and forty noses were buried somewhere between Acadie and Delaware's waters. He turned again to the map. The aviator was over the line in Mexico, yet without extradition papers he was seized and incarcerated in an envelope.

Coldly the schoolmaster surveyed his pupils. There is a limit to the patience of even the most sympathetic teacher. "Now, where is the baby that must be amused?" he asked.

Up came forty innocent, wide-eyed countenances.

"Caluchie, you seem to be —"

"Nun-no-no, sir," stammered the scared Italian; "I don't do it."

"Do you know who did?"

"I — I don't know nothin'," Victor quavered; but even as he spoke he looked directly across the aisle at his red-headed neighbor, and Mr. Daniel Parks's glare followed.

Johnnie Kelly was busy. The hole near the circumference of the inkwell top suggested an

open mouth; so, having chewed the end of a match-stick into a brush, Johnnie had inked in a pair of crossed eyes and a snub nose, and was at this particular instant painting a number of eighth and quarter notes apparently shooting from the black throat.

“Johnnie Kelly, stand!” came the command.

Hastily dropping the inky match on the floor, the tallest boy in the class gathered his spindling legs in from the aisle and rose, his mouth open in simulated surprise; but he could no more conceal his guilt than he could hide his freckles or his pert pug nose, for the whole class looked at him and giggled.

From auburn head to tan shoes Mr. Parks eyed him, critically. The boy had not been in the school five full days, and he was not sure what that survey meant. He shifted his weight from one ungainly cub foot to the other and back again; he looked down and found that his hands certainly dangled far from the ends of his coat sleeves, so he shoved them into his pockets; that not seeming polite, he withdrew them and clasped them behind his back.

Why that look in the big teacher’s face? Johnnie knew his own coat was as good as that of Van Zarn, the boy in the seat behind him; but under Mr. Parks’s searching gaze he had to confess to himself that it was rather wrinkly. The



The whole class looked at him and giggled

red sweater, appropriate in the crowded Bronx school from which he had come, was out of place in this "kid-glove" classroom. His tan shoes, only two weeks old, had not been polished since they came out of the store.

As he stood there fidgeting and the man slowly looked him up and down once more and uttered no word, it was borne in upon the boy that while his face, his hands, his body, were as clean as soap and water could make them, his general appearance was in marked contrast with that of his classmates. It was a humiliating discovery.

"Well?" Mr. Parks towered above him expectantly, and again the class bubbled over.

Johnnie wished the man would show temper—it would seem natural. Instead, that half-pitying smile cut the boy to the heart. He tried looking at Arizona's new metropolis, but that struck him as most improper, and he finally glued his eyes on the shaven head of Victor Caluchie.

"Well?" repeated Mr. Parks.

"I ain't lookin' fer trouble," protested the culprit meekly.

"Young man," said the teacher, "in the one week you have been in this school you have got into more mischief than all the other boys put together. You seem to be out of your element."

The last remark hurt, and Johnnie was too

confused to reply; while Mr. Parks studied the caricature again.

"This is the limit," the man declared. "I'll write a letter asking your father to call."

To beg off might have been Johnnie's procedure if the boys and girls had not exhibited such derisive joy. What stung him most deeply was the chuckle of Van Zarn, the boy in the seat behind — the well-dressed, popular Van Zarn, wearing a conspicuous black eye presented him by Master Kelly only the day previous. Johnnie's head drooped. It was a lucky droop, for his eye lit upon a small pocket fastened by thumb-tacks to the back of the teacher's desk. In this pocket was a notebook labeled, "SENT TO THE NURSE."

Kelly was inspired. "M-m-my father's sick," he mumbled.

The instructor hesitated. "I'm sorry to hear that." And he glanced up at the boy. That Celtic face was never meant to conceal the truth. "What ails him, Johnnie?"

Measles and scarlet fever and mumps raced through the boy's mind, but he let them pass. He had a strong conviction that grown-ups never had those ailments. Longingly he eyed the nurse-book as he answered: "I — I can't think o' the name jest now. It's a hard one; but — but I'll find out for you."

"Humph!" grunted Daniel Parks. "Stay at

noon and I'll give you a note for him anyway. He'll have something to think about."

Johnnie subsided limply into his seat, and though Mr. Parks proceeded to teach, not one word of his instruction sank into Johnnie's mind. A fly alighted on the boy's inkwell and scratched himself with one mizzen leg — a lazy-looking fly, doubtless easy to catch; but a wise fly, as he carefully avoided the wet quarter notes. With his feet full of ink, that fly would have possessed great potentiality; but Johnnie, heeding him not, sat bolt upright, the spirit of mischief dead in his eyes.

Visions of a burly father in blue and brass buttons, off duty at the twelve o'clock shift, passed through him; but it was not the prospect of a thrashing that was weighing on Johnnie's mind. His father always tended to that job with fervor, yet always in the right place, and the sting would pass away. Not so easily would vanish the sting of that lie.

Johnnie knew that to many boys a falsehood to the teacher was something to chuckle over and brag about. In fact, in the other school Johnnie had felt much that way. He had never reveled in the pastime, but had condoned it in others as a justifiable defense against the enemy.

Here was a teacher, however, who remembered his own boyhood. True, to-day, Johnnie had, in

the vernacular, got that teacher's goat; but in the short while Johnnie had been in this school he had found Mr. Parks "on the level," a man through and through, even though addicted to wearing a wrist-watch. And now, in a sudden panic, to escape a walloping — or was it because of Van Zarn's derisive joy? — he had lied to a man like that!

What should he do now? Confess? Being just an overgrown boy with a sensitive nature in spite of his rough exterior, he did not dare. He had thrashed Van Zarn, the acknowledged leader, but he could not face the titter of little Max Schuler or the twinkle in the blue eyes of the golden-haired girl sitting next to Van Zarn. He concluded to wriggle out of this dilemma, consoling himself with the most solemn oaths that never again would he lie, though it were to save him from death itself.

The nurse-book on the back of the desk looked very inviting. Term after term, from the day when his father had dragged him, unwilling, into kindergarten, he had seen classmates with runny noses, red eyes, blotchy faces, or doggy barks march out of the room with just such a nurse-book in hand, to receive vacations of various lengths. That book must be loaded with diseases; and there, within two feet, waiting to serve his purpose, was the valuable information he needed.

It was ten minutes later that he got up enough courage to slip the precious booklet from its place while Mr. Parks was trying to pump from a dull-eyed maid twenty per cent of sixty gallons of gasoline. Surreptitiously Johnnie studied: "Sore throat — O.K. — return to class." "Measles — sent home." He passed over tonsillitis and chicken-pox, as not serious enough, and was about to decide upon eczema as sounding rather fatal, when his eye lit upon a longer one. After the entry, "Victor Caluchie," was an ailment he had never heard of before. It looked most formidable and was followed by the comment, "Bad case — sent home for treatment — not to return until cured." With a sigh of relief the boy copied the name of the dreadful disease, and slipped the book back into place.

CHAPTER II

SOMETHING DOING

WHEN the noon gong sounded and the class marched out past him, Johnnie tried to appear unconscious of their derision. He even grinned back at Van Zarn as if he really believed that young man's smile was meant for admiration. But down in his heart he knew it meant, "Kelly, you're a queer bird —"; and Johnnie was relieved when the door closed behind the boy with the black eye.

"Now, see here, Kelly," began Mr. Parks, taking the boy's conduct card from a stack in the desk, "this has been a strenuous start in a new school. Every one of the departmental teachers has complained. Here is one week of Kelly:

"Admitted Monday at nine o'clock. In the science room, lifted Caluchie's paper with fingers purposely inked —"

Johnnie choked his laugh, but a smothered sound escaped.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said Mr. Parks.

"That's because you did n't see Old Sal — I mean Miss Primton's face," whispered Johnnie

confidentially. "Looked as if she smelt burnt rubber."

Under the desk dived Mr. Parks, probably to pick up something, and bobbed up again, face red, but painfully set as he continued the reading of the card:

"At the end of the third period carried off Van Zarn's books and left them on the windowsill in the hall."

"Who's that girl alongside o' him?" interposed the boy.

"You mean Georgia Carter?"

"Yeh. *Some* class, hey?"

"Well—that probably describes the Carters with reasonable accuracy. What about Jack and Georgia?"

"He was chinnin' so hard with her, I jest thought I'd take care of his books so he would n't lose them."

The schoolmaster dropped the card and eyed his pupil severely; but not a smile appeared on the boy's face, and the teacher picked up the card once more.

"Tried to make the science lesson more practical by putting chewing-gum on Cohen's seat."

"Is that adhesion or cohesion, Mr. Parks?" Johnnie ventured; and he honestly had no intention of being flippant or disrespectful. But it was an unfortunate question. If by any chance

the teacher had previously been inclined to be lenient, there was thereafter no doubt of his attitude.

"Young man," snapped the master, "you probably understand me when I say you are acting entirely too fresh; and to-day is your judgment day. Keep a civil tongue and listen: I told you that it does not pay to have fun by making trouble for others. I advised you to play *with* the boys, not against them. Yet yesterday you threw all the board-rubbers up into the hopper of the ventilator intake to make trouble for me; and locked Max Schuler in the ventilator outlet down here behind my desk, and he spent two hours there."

"I was playin' *with* him, like you said," protested Johnnie apologetically. "He did n't lose nothin' but music and gym — they don't count — and spellin', and he's a fine speller."

"I told you it was time you got over being a little boy," Mr. Parks went on sternly; "time you got into some healthful sport out in the open air — something to make you looked up to by all your comrades."

"And I tried to do it, too," blurted out Johnnie. "The fellers did n't have nothin' to do with me much, so I goes up to Jack Van Zarn, because he's the huskiest, and says, 'Say, who is the leader o' the gang?'

“And he says, ‘Gang! What gang?’ — jest like that.

“And I says, ‘Your gang!’

“And he says, ‘There is n’t any gang in this school.’

“And I says, ‘Ah, g’wan!’ — jest like that. ‘What cher t’ink I am, a boob?’

“And he says, ‘You’re a funny fellow,’ — jest like that.

“And I says, ‘Say, you t’ink a lot o’ yourself, don’t cher?’ — jest like that. ‘Won’t have nothin’ to do with a feller that can’t talk Riverside-Drivey, huh! Ain’t I as good as you?’

“And he says, ‘Who says you ain’t?’

“And I says, ‘Why don’t the fellers treat me the same?’

“And he says, ‘P’r’aps because you do so many fool stunts.’

“And I let him look at my knuckles, jest like that, and I says, ‘I’m a fool, am I, huh?’

“And he says, ‘I did n’t say that.’

“And I says, ‘You’re another. Wait till I ketch you outside. I’m goin’ to make you fellers look up to me, jest like Mr. Parks says.’ And — ”

“Hold on!” objected Mr. Parks. “You certainly have a peculiar way of following out my advice. I know you had a fight Wednesday afternoon.”

Johnnie’s tone changed. “I knocked the

stuffin' out o' him," he grinned. "Ain't that eye a beaut of a shiner?"

Mr. Parks coughed suspiciously. "I told you that you'd never get any more friends by thrashing than you would by playing tricks. I said, 'Amuse, but don't injure.'"

"Jest what you said!" cried Johnnie enthusiastically. "So I thought o' that fly —"

"Goodness gracious!" ejaculated the teacher, clapping both hands to his head. "I don't know what you'll do next if I coach you. Here, take this letter home and bring me an answer at one o'clock. I give up the job."

Out in the hall Kelly, Jr., paused to survey the superscription on the sealed envelope, and made a wry face. "Gee horse-fat!" he groaned. "Some joke, ha, ha! — 'Kindness of Johnnie!'"

Very little time did Johnnie spend at home. He raced back before the school-patrol and tip-toed up to the third story. The floor was deserted. Into his classroom he glided, where from his pocket he drew paper and envelope. In laborious backhand he penned his father's answer:

My deer Mr. Parks:

I'm sory to hear how bad Johnnie been he says he is going to be better as I am in bed sick sick with Pediculosis, and Oblidge

your Freind

Patrick Kelly

He read it over, then wrote:

P.S. — I'll lick him when I get better.

"There!" he sighed. "He oughter, anyway. If I git away with it this time, never again for yours truly, or I hope to die and sizzle!" Then he superscribed the envelope —

Mr. Daniel Parks
Atrest

There was an uncomfortable feeling that that was not the way his teacher spelled the word, and he wished he had not thrown the other envelope down the sewer; but, "What's the dif?" he muttered. "Pop can't expect to spell everythin' right."

His final touch was:

Kindness of Johnnie

— in a corner of the envelope.

"And that ain't no joke, *this* time, believe ME!" was his earnest comment as he slipped the epistle into his pocket.

From another pocket he drew a banana-skin and thoroughly smeared his tan shoes, polishing them with a new board-rubber.

"The guy that wrote how you could do it was n't no liar," Johnnie chuckled, surveying his footgear, now more in harmony with his red hair; and he tossed the banana-skin into the hopper of the ventilator over his head. He hung

his sweater in the clothing-closet, brushed his clothes with the teacher's whisk-broom, and surveyed himself in the mirror on the door of the teacher's locker.

"Gee, what a mop!" he exclaimed, running his hand through his carrotty bristles. He dampened the front locks at the drinking-fountain in the hall and combed them down with a girl's side-comb taken from the "Lost and Found" drawer in the teacher's desk. That a dry, wiry red brush stood up like an aigrette toward the rear, either escaped his notice or did not worry him, for he tossed the comb up into the ventilator to join the banana-skin and smiled at his changed appearance in the mirror. He felt that he had made a good beginning.

Barely time was there for the strategist to bolt down a girls' staircase to the floor below and dodge through to the boys' end of the building, there to tag his own class line as it climbed to its afternoon tasks.

Mr. Parks was still in the yard when Johnnie took his seat without the usual fooling. He waited for some one to speak to him. One boy, only, showed signs of wanting to be chummy, and he was Victor Caluchie.

Johnnie was not flattered. Walking over to Van Zarn he held out his hand. "Shake, will yer?" he urged.

"Sure," responded Jack.

"I licked you fair, did n't I?"

"Sure thing," admitted Jack, tenderly feeling his eye.

"No hard feelin's?" questioned the conqueror.

"Nope."

"And I'm head o' the gang?" Johnnie spoke eagerly.

"What gang? There is no gang that I know of."

Johnnie was staggered. But, gang or no gang, there was no denying that all his efforts to win recognition had failed; and the entrance of Mr. Parks cut short the interview.

"Kelly, did you give your father my note?" The teacher was surely on the trail.

"Here's the answer," was the boy's listless reply.

Mr. Parks cut open the envelope. The man's face turned red; he cleared his throat.

"Johnnie," said he suavely, "I'm sorry to hear this. Is your father able to sit up?"

"Not much," replied Johnnie.

"That's too bad. Do you think I might see him if I called?"

"It's catchin'."

"That's true. I never thought of that. Does the doctor think it has got down on his lungs yet?"

“It might git there if he ain’t careful. He must n’t git in a draft, or — git excited.”

Dangerously quiet was the teacher’s voice. “I want to see you at three o’clock, Kelly.”

When the class left Mr. Parks’s room on its afternoon schedule, the boy certainly felt miserable; so miserable that he could not sit still in the grammar-teacher’s room, and went out into the hall, ostensibly to get a drink. Hardly had he closed the door behind him when Mr. Parks’s voice came from the next doorway: “— Not more than two dollars, and put this note in the basket.” Then Mr. Parks’s door closed. A boy scurried down the hall, stuffing some money into his pocket.

Johnnie needed a big drink after that. “It can’t have nothin’ to do with me, of course,” he mused, “but it sounds mighty phony. I’m afraid he’s on all right — and there’ll be somethin’ doin’ fer me, all right, all right!”

CHAPTER III

A DREADFUL DISEASE

AFTER three, once more Johnnie and his teacher sat alone in the classroom. Through the closed windows came the high-pitched voices of the homeward-bound youngsters in the street below adding their babble to the clang and clatter of street-cars and the raucous warnings of autos; yet the ear of Master Kelly was deaf to it all. He watched teacher take out the caricature and place it on the desk; he breathed heavily when beside it was laid the letter signed "Patrick Kelly."

"Johnnie" — the voice was not steady — "I am very much disappointed. I thought there was good in you in spite of your silly tricks. I have told the other teachers that my faith in you has not been shaken, but — " He paused.

Johnnie felt his face getting hotter and hotter. This was not what he had expected. He swallowed several times. "Kin I close the door?" he asked. And when the chance of prying eyes had been shut out, the boy sank into a seat near the door, buried his face in his arms on the desk, and sobbed as only a big boy can sob.

He felt a hand laid gently on his shoulder.

"What's the matter, boy?" The tone was certainly not antagonistic.

Johnnie lifted his head. "Aw, I'm a geek to blubber," he choked out. "I know I ain't like the other fellers, and I ought n't to care. I talk different, I act different. They t'ink I'm a freak. I've tried ev'rythin' — teasin', bein' funny, fightin' — I've tried all you said. The more I do the more I git in Dutch. I'll do anythin' else you say, Mr. Parks. You're white. All I want is jest to be one o' the gang and have 'em like me. I'm lonesome, somethin' fierce, and that's the trut' — I'm lonesome!" Whereupon Johnnie broke down again.

Mr. Parks's voice was quite husky: "I knew there must be an answer; but I did n't guess that."

And then the door swung open and Johnnie sat up as in strode a red-headed policeman with a basket of fruit hanging on one arm and a bottle of wine tucked under the other.

"My name's Kelly," declared the newcomer as the schoolmaster turned to receive him, "Pat Kelly. That's my chip" — pointing to Johnnie. "This is Mr. Parks, I'm thinkin'? I come around to thank ye, but there must be some mistake."

He set the basket and the wine on the desk, hung his cap on the wine-bottle, dived into his



*"I come around to thank ye, but there must be
some mistake"*

pocket and, extracting a letter, proceeded to read it aloud laboriously:

My dear Mr. Kelly

It was wid deep regret that I heard of your seerious condition. I niver before heard of the affliction you mention being seevere enough to keep a man in bed. I sympat'ize wid you deeply and send you this fruit and wine wid the hope that they may make your stay indoors more pleasant.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Parks

"Phat's the joke?" he demanded.

"No joke, that I know of," was the teacher's answer. "I'm delighted to see you well enough to be out of bed; but I am puzzled after getting this note from you —" And over into the elder Kelly's hand went the paper Johnnie had handed in.

"Phat's that disease, pedi-cu-losis?" asked Kelly, Sr.

A dictionary was handed him, the definition underlined.

"Oh, my lard!" he roared. With one stride he had his son by the collar.

That spidery young gentleman was laid across the parental knee and the dictionary applied to the place of greatest altitude with such vigor that, before Mr. Parks could interfere, the book had split in two and the leaves went sailing about the room. But not a whimper escaped young

Kelly. In fact, at that particular moment it felt good to get a licking.

"Hold on, Mr. Kelly," pleaded the schoolmaster. "Don't be too severe with the boy. I judge by your actions that you did not write this note?"

The father's arm paused in mid-air. "Write it? Do I look it?"

He surveyed the remnants in his hand and permitted his son to rise. "It's still got that wurrud," said he. "Johnnie, ye can write that deffynition five hun'erd times the night."

"Mr. Kelly," the teacher broke in, "I think Johnnie has learned his lesson. I thank you for your part in it. But, after all, he's only a big boy who's not over being a small boy yet. I have just had a talk with him, and my faith in him is now absolutely unshakable. Some day you will be proud of him."

Florid-faced and excited, the father stared at the teacher.

"He — ? You! — proud? Holy macaroons!" he sputtered; then grabbed his cap from the wine-bottle. "I'd better git out before I skin 'im alive," he exploded. "Mr. Teacher, you've got the queerest way o' handlin' kids iver I see. I'll leave 'im to you. T'anks for the shtuff" — a wave toward the fruit and wine — "but I guess it ain't mine. When you git t'rough wid

'im, take a drink on me to stiddy yourself." Officer Kelly jammed his cap on his head and bolted.

Mr. Parks seated himself to catch his breath.

When the heavy tramp of the policeman's arch-supporting shoes had died away on the stairs, Johnnie came up close to the desk. "That ain't really so, what you told my father last, is it?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Yes, it is, Johnnie."

"And you ain't kiddin'?"

"It's the honest truth, Johnnie."

"After all I've done?" He placed a hand timidly, reverently, on his teacher's arm.

"After all you've done. Boy, you see that all your efforts have failed. They can't be the right ones. Now, try being your own, natural self. If you are worth cultivating as a companion, others will soon find it out; if you are not, it is well that you find it out as soon as possible." He took Johnnie's card from the desk and tore it up. "There! I have faith in you. I can't prove that my faith is justified."

"I can," cried Johnnie with a vim, "and I will." Then he added sheepishly: "Say, can't we give that fruit to Victor? I seen by the nurse-book how he has been so sick with that disease, and his folks is too poor —"

The teacher controlled himself sufficiently to

suggest: "Had n't you better wait, Johnnie, until you have learned that definition?"

The shot passed over the young man's head, and the spirit of fun cropping as usual to the surface, he pronounced with a grin: "Honest Injun, your come-back was some class, believe me! I'd laugh m'self, if I was n't so sore!"

CHAPTER IV

THEY SPEAK A VARIOUS LANGUAGE

IT was Buffalo Bill's fault that Johnnie Kelly was almost late to school Monday morning. Jack Van Zarn had lent him the paper-covered book, probably as a peace-offering. Before Johnnie's folks had moved across into Manhattan, there had been few chances to get hold of a real book. The shelves of the Bronx school contained "Two Years Before the Mast," "Westward Ho!" "The Life of Livingstone," and such indigestibles, and certainly the fellows who seldom saw a whole pair of trousers had no home libraries to lend. Johnnie had heard of Buffalo Bill, but now for the first time in his life he was living with the great Western scout. Down Amsterdam Avenue Johnnie had chased a herd of buffalo and killed four Indians. He was stalking a fifth when he bumped into Dutch Henry, the school-janitor's assistant, and caromed into the school-yard just as the tardy-bell rang.

The monitors were lying in wait at the foot of the boys' stairs to record delinquents. Johnnie stuffed the paper-covered book into his pocket and bolted for the visitors' stairway.

He reached the top floor and, breathing heavily,

glided past the principal's platform and around the corner of the square piano in front.

"Kelly, I wish to speak to you."

Johnnie stopped short and reluctantly faced about. There stood Mr. Hartley, the white-haired principal of the school, at the Bible-rack on the right-hand corner of the platform. On the wall behind him the clock's hands crept close to the hour of nine.

"Kelly," said the old man, and his tone as well as his kindly face set the boy at ease, "Mr. Parks has told me the story of your first week in this school and I sympathize with you. But I, too, as you know, have been obliged to take notice of you. Your reply to my request for the author of 'Rip Van Winkle' in assembly Friday was rather — er — unusual. The departmental teachers complain that you habitually use the most outrageous slang and ungrammatical English. Slang will not win you a way into the hearts of your teachers and companions in this school. Do you understand?"

"I'm hep," answered Kelly contritely.

"What?"

"I — I — mean I know what you're tryin' to say."

Mr. Hartley bit his lip to control its suspicious quiver. "Next time any one asks you who wrote 'Rip Van Winkle,' answer, 'Washington Irving';

and don't disgrace us all by blurting out, 'Betcher it's Willum Cohen Bryan.'"

"I'm on, now, Mr. Hartley," said Johnnie meekly; "you see, I allus git him and Irvink fussed."

"There you go again! I repeat, it is your English that handicaps you more than your incorrect answers. Follow my advice: listen to the speech of men who have made their mark in the world; then you will know what is good English. Be careful how you answer a question in assembly hereafter. It is too late to go to your room. Take a seat over there in the far corner."

Mr. Hartley pressed the electric bells.

Miss Sally Primton, departmental teacher of science, music, and physical training, strutted to the piano, and after a little fussing with the music, settled upon the stool. The monitors grasped the brass handles of the great rolling-doors. Mr. Parks, standing beside the piano, crooked his finger as it hung by his side. In response, Miss Primton hit the piano and the resultant crash was properly understood; the wooden curtains rolled aside to the music of something like a dirge with ripples in it; and there, as at the touch of a magician's wand, was an assembly-room. Miss Primton played "Hi-awatha." The boys and girls paraded into the room and, rounding the piano, passed down the

center aisle, spread out fan-wise and stood in rows in the small aisles between the seats while the teachers glided to their places along the side lines.

Mr. Parks again crooked his finger. Again Sally lunged at the keyboard, and the school crumpled into their seats under the blow.

After the reading of the Bible, Johnnie tried to drown his depression by joining with a right good-will in singing:

“Okle umbia, the gemar vtheoshun,
Thome are-fer bray-eve and the free, he!
The shine are-feach paytreeock stevoshun,
A woi-ul doffer sar-ar mage tooth—ee
Thar-ee mandrake smake he-ee roses sembul
Where-en Lear Bertie’s fawn stansin phew!
Thar-ee baa nurse-maid tea-e-runny sembul,
Where-en-baw-un by th-red why tanblue!”

The principal had slipped into his office, an anteroom to the left of the platform, leaving the exercises to Mr. Parks, when amid the throes of Bertie’s fawn and the nursemaid there climbed upon the platform a tall, thin gentleman whose grandiose demeanor so awed the youngsters that they wound up weakly a full tone flat. He might have stepped out of the “Rollo Books” with his black silk hat in hand, long black coat, and beatific face solemnly radiant with the desire to edify all little boys and girls. But what made

Johnnie sit up and take notice was the fact that the stranger's mustache and over-abundant hair was fiery red like Kelly's own.

Mr. Hartley hurried out of his office.

"Just the man I want to see!" said the principal effusively. "Come right into my office." And seizing a pendant arm, he linked it in his own and attempted to drag the great man from the rostrum while keeping up a continuous patter.

But Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan had not taken a day off from business wholly to waste his eloquence upon one person, and that one so unappreciative an audience as old Charles T. Hartley. As every teacher in the room knew, there was due a speech to the children, and that speech was going to come.

"Just one minute, Mr. Hartley," he whispered, cleverly breaking the jiu-jit-su hold — he had been tackled by the zealous principal before — "I did come on a very special errand for to see you, but fur-rst I do so enjoy for to watch these bright and intelligent countenances." And his own face beamed benignly.

Mr. Hartley practiced all the arts of diplomacy and indirection to coax that speech from the platform; but it would not budge. It did not ask for a chance; it knew there was a certainty of being heard if it could only keep its vantage-point.

It ended by both seating themselves behind the long desk.

After three scared youngsters from class 7 A had stammered through quotations from Stevenson, Mr. Hartley made a last attempt. Glancing at the clock, he leaned over to his companion and whispered, "We should like to have you say something to the children, but it is so late I suppose you would n't care —"

Mr. Gilfillan hemmed, "Well — er —"

"Never mind, we'll let you off this time," added the principal; and then aloud to the second assistant, who was patiently waiting for orders: "Mr. Parks, you may —"

"Oh, since you insist, I'll say a few wur-rds," interrupted the dignitary hastily; "I think I can present some casual remarks on John Burrers. I would n't like to disapp'int the childern."

Hartley surrendered gracefully. Though he groaned inwardly for John Burroughs, he stepped to the Bible-stand.

"We have with us to-day, unexpectedly, a faithful friend of ours," said he; "one who takes a good deal of interest in our school. I know you will be pleased to hear a few words from our friend and neighbor, the President of our Parents' Association, Mr. Gilfillan." He waved his hand toward the great Alexander and sat down.

The visitor arose with dignity and stepped

forward to rest one hand on the Bible-stand. Having waited for the children to become accustomed to his august presence, he joined his fingertips behind his back, spread his feet apart, and gave the salutation.

“Good MORNING, b’ys and gurruls.”

The greeting was returned with a will, some addressing him as “Mr. Villain” while others got it variously from “Spillem” to “Bill Killim”; and Johnnie pricked up his ears, for here, evidently, was a man who had made his mark in the world.

Mr. Gilfillan cleared his throat and commenced slowly and impressively: “Nothing was further from my cogitations when I come into this mag-nif-ee-cent assembly-room this morn than the thought of addressing you; but as your dear principal insists” — a bow toward the dear principal — “it behooves me, unpre-purr-r-rd as I am, to make a few auspicious remarks.” The orator ran his eye over the sea of faces before him, and continued, as though he had just discovered the wonderful fact: “It does my heart good to see all these bright and shining faces. I think this school — MY school — is the best school in the city. We have the prruttiest gurruls” — he bobbed to the left and loosened his risible muscles in anticipation of an appreciative giggle, which the obliging maidens promptly furnished

— “and the stur-rdiest, monliest b’ys” — his pause and bob to the right brought the expected response from that side — “and, if you will pardon an old fellow, I will add, the sweetest lady-teachers in the city.” This last shot out rapidly and was punctuated with sundry little bobs to various quarters of the room.

Now, his last lurch dwelling expectantly upon Miss Primton, who had politely turned on the piano stool to face him, that lady nearly cracked her face trying to avoid the charge of *lèse-majesté*. Luckily, he turned away before the tragedy actually occurred. She swung around, and the face she presented to the children before her looked as if she had found a worm in a chestnut, for which mishap they were responsible.

“Fur-rst,” continued the speaker, “I desire to congratulate the little ones who spoke so bravely those po-ems from the wur-r-rks of one of our greatest propounders of English literatoor. All these little gems which your teachers learn you, b’ys and gurruls, will be a great pleasure to you in after life. The man or woman who can give an appropreete quotation on the proper occasions find themselves welcome amongst the most edge-you-cated envi-ronments.”

The next few minutes were filled with quotations. When the principal happened to look toward Johnnie Kelly, the boy grinned and winked.

Mr. Hartley's answering scowl had a temporary effect and Johnnie turned his attention to other things. He watched the Delsartian movements of Sally Primton as with one hand she deftly gathered up the short hairs at the back of her neck and prodded them up out of sight; he fidgeted in his seat, felt under it, and failing to find any stray quid of gum, he again gave ear to the orator, who had wandered far.

"You may make mony failures before you find your true sp'ere," the speaker was continuing. "Washington was a surveyor; and what did he become?" Gilfillan raised his right hand above his head as though feeling for raindrops and paused. Johnnie had to grit his teeth and hold on to the seat to keep from answering, especially as several arms semaphored up around him; but the President of the Parents' Association of 199 was mean enough to answer himself: "He become a soldier and a statesman. Lincoln split rails to earn a livelyhood; and what did *he* become?" Johnnie grinned, winked again at the principal and chuckled to himself, "Nix for mine!" Only Max Schuler volunteered to answer, the others being discouraged. Max wiggled his hand excitedly and even rose in his seat. In vain! he was not even given a chance — "great l'yer, a leader, a martyr!" declared the speaker. "A. T. Stewart never found his place in life until he had went

into the dry-goods business; and — !” He paused to give more effect to his words, then turning to the boys’ side, thundered, “S-s-see what HE become!” whereupon Johnnie, together with divers other aroused youngsters, twisted around expectantly in his seat to follow the Gilfillan extended finger as it pointed down the long aisle toward the rear hall. But the startled janitor’s assistant, Dutch Henry, who had paused back there to view the distinguished guest, finding himself thus singled out by the accusing digit, modestly, yet hastily, withdrew.

The visitor stepped down near the piano and, plucking a paper from his pocket impressively, began to speak in a confidential tone, “I have here in my hand a copy of an epistol from another great mon who was not a soldier or a statesmon, a letter wrote only the other day to you b’ys and gurruls of New York. This mon and his field of notoriety you can always remember by the letter B. Now, in the spring we love to get out of doors. We look — for what is it we look for in the spring that begins with the letter B?”

“Baseball,” suggested Max Schuler.

“Well — er — I was n’t thinking of that. I meant B — BUDS — ” He hesitated before the word as if gathering energy, and ejected it explosively — “The — Buds on the trees. And

then we look for the return from the South of some flying creatures whose names begin with B — the BURRDS. And now we hear the hum of the — BEES, and we see all the Bee-you-tee-ful BUGS. This mon who wrote this letter to you is very old now, with white hair, and he has spent his life out in the open air among the Buds, and — Burr-r-rds, and — Bees, and — Bugs, and he has wrote many delightful dissertations of Buds, and Burr-r-rds, and other outdoor animals, and he is now living out in Californy close to nay-chew-er and loved by most everybody. And this here is a copy of the letter he has wrote to all the b'ys and gurruls of New York. Now, I know you would like to hear the epistol of this mon who is so famous and who loves nay-chew-er. And his name, b'ys and gurruls, like Buds, and — Burr-r-rds and — Bees, and — Bugs, commences with B. Now, who is it?

“Ah! That auburn-haired young mon in the corner seat of the front room.”

As luck would have it — or was it the attraction of the fiery head? — Mr. Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan had pitched upon Johnnie Kelly, who was on his feet, carried away by the insinuating references to a man in the West who loved outdoor life.

“Buffalo Bill!” the boy shouted.

Gilfillan was disconcerted; but after the laugh

had subsided, "Well — er — no," he stammered. "This mon is much, oh! much greater than Buffalo Bill."

This staggered Johnnie; but he thought it must be a joke. Instead of subsiding into his seat in response to the frantic efforts of Isidore Cohen, who had seized the red-headed boy's coat-tails, Johnnie leaned over the desk, his eyes wide open, cheeks flushed, and said in a thrilled tone of expectancy, "G'wan — I'll bite."

"Er — what did you say?" Gilfillan was unfortunate enough to ask.

And Johnnie, with an ingratiating smile, replied confidentially, "I mean, I'll be the goat — Who is he?"

The next Master Kelly knew, he was standing against the wall in the office, the door shut, and Mr. Hartley was facing him.

"I — I could n't help it," stammered the culprit; "I forgot. And, I sure wanted to know. Say, if any guy's got sump'n on Buffalo Bill, won't you please put me wise?"

"Johnnie, Johnnie!" ejaculated Mr. Hartley, "why don't you try to use the plain, every-day English you hear around you?"

Johnnie straightened up and spoke earnestly but respectfully. "Say, now, honest injun, man to man, do you t'ink I could ever learn to talk like dat gink out dere?" — and he indicated the

direction of the platform by jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

The principal, after an unsuccessful attempt to express himself, left the office, closing the door behind him. So Johnnie Kelly failed to hear the letter written to him by the Great Unknown out among the Buds and Birds and Bees and Bugs of California.

CHAPTER V

LOST — A FRIEND

JOHNNIE sank limply into a chair in the corner of the office. There he sat when the door opened admitting Mr. Gilfillan and the principal. They paid no attention to him.

“That’s all right — that’s all right, Mr. Hartley,” the President of the Parents’ Association was saying; “accidents will happen in the best-regulated environments. I am not at all ann’yed. You see, I did n’t come prepurr-rd to speak. I come about another matter.”

When the principal dropped into the swivel-chair, Gilfillan likewise seated himself, placed his high silk hat on the desk-top, and leaned forward.

“My real urrand, Mr. Hartley, is to ask you a favor. There is a vacancy in the teaching staff of this school, and I’ve come to ask you to try my niece — ”

“I show no favors, Mr. Gilfillan,” warned the old school chief.

“And I ask none that you, a reasonable mon, would refuse. All I request is for to give my niece a trial. If you try her ever so short a time and say you don’t want her, I’ll be satisfied.”

"That's fair enough," admitted the principal.
 "She is on the eligible list?"

"Yes."

"Her name?"

"Helen Bouck."

"Send her along; I'll quickly find out whether
 I want her in my school."

"Thank you."

Mr. Gilfillan rose and took his hat. Then it
 was that his eyes lit upon Johnnie.

"A vurra interestin' type," observed the great
 man, studying the boy critically. "Young mon,
 with that head of hair of yours you ought for to
 make a great success in life. The wurruld owes
 much to red-headed men. Just one obsorrvation
 I wish to make young mon: I regret for to inform
 you that Buffalo Bill is no more. He deparrted
 this life the fur-rst part of this year."

Bidding Mr. Hartley good-morning, Mr. Gil-
 fillan passed out.

"You may go to your room, Kelly," said the
 principal.

"Is he stringin' me?" asked Johnnie huskily.

"No, Johnnie, he is not deceiving you." Had
 Johnnie been less depressed by the tragic news
 he would have understood the twinkle in Mr.
 Hartley's eyes.

The boy dragged his leaden feet toward his
 classroom. A great sorrow had come upon him.

Alone in the corridor just outside of Room 306 he took the book from his pocket and studied the face of the man under the broad-brimmed hat.

“’T ain’t so,” he muttered; “there ain’t no bird or bug could lay over Buffalo Bill — and to think he’s gone!”

Sadly he returned the book to his pocket and entered the room.

A chorus of snickers was hushed by the command of the teacher. Johnnie delivered his pass from the principal and took his seat. So blue was he that the glances and guarded attempts of his classmates to attract his attention made no impression.

He was doubly depressed. Buffalo Bill was dead; and he, Johnnie Kelly, had made himself the laughing-stock of the school. The fact that Mr. Parks made no comment only served to show how far outside the pale Kelly had placed himself. Could he ever win against such a handicap?

CHAPTER VI

THE OPENING OF HOSTILITIES

JOHNNIE KELLY was not correcting the girl's composition on his desk.

The other boys and girls of 7 B read and scratched hieroglyphics on the six-by-nine sheets industriously, as became scholars with but two classes between them and graduation. Through the windows came the rumble and clang of the Amsterdam Avenue cars, the rattle of delivery-wagons, and the harsh warnings of auto horns.

Johnnie was contemplating the framed Sir Galahad who stood beside the eastern coast of the United States above the front blackboards. He wondered if the knight was as uncomfortable in those tin pants as was Master Johnnie in his new stiff collar.

Between Friday afternoon and Monday morning a transformation had taken place in the appearance of Johnnie, and no one realized it better than he.

"Ach, me Chancey Oilcott!" his mother had crowed as she pushed him out of the door at eight-twenty, "suit all oir-roned, dinky collar, red both ends — red head, red shoes, — sure ye'll make a hit wid the Manhattan gur-r-ruls

this marnin', I'm thinkin'! Good luck to yez, me long-legged saint from the Bronx!"

This sally had sent him forth in a huff, but now as he contemplated himself he was agreeably impressed. Real polish certainly did make his tan shoes very, very red and attractive, sprawled out there in the aisle. Perhaps if he did n't have such long legs, or if he could wear long pants; if his coat-sleeves would only grow as fast as his arms, and if this new collar were not so much like Sir Galahad's armor — Still, a guarded scrutiny of his classmates convinced him that he was, in outward appearance at least, as natty as they.

A burst of laughter from Geo'gia made Master Kelly jump. It also startled the class and brought the eyes of every youngster in the room upon the merry maid.

"Well, Geo'gia!" exclaimed the teacher, even in the stress of the moment pronouncing her name as her Southern accent had corrupted it.

"Ah just could n't help it, Mr. Parks," apologized the culprit, still laughing; and to Johnnie's horror she carried that young man's composition up to the teacher's desk.

Mr. Parks took the paper, and he laughed too; and while Johnnie's face became as red as his hair, the instructor read aloud:

The skin is a layer of meet with holes in for perspiration and hairs which beautifies the complexion the body



MAGNET ~~WATER~~ EMBROIDERY

“Good luck to yez, me long-legged saint from the Bronx”

should have a certain amount of clothes a feller's skin should be washed daily or else dirt will get into the paws. It is a skin I got O per cent in cinnamons.

A howl of delight from the class greeted this effusion. Jack Van Zarn laughed so heartily that Mr. Parks had to caution him, and Master Jack would have fared ill could Johnnie have laid hands on him at that instant.

It is not likely that Mr. Parks meant to hold Johnnie up to ridicule. Had he stopped to think, he probably would not have read the composition. But, after all, the teacher was only a big boy; it sounded funny, and he wanted others to enjoy it with him. The last sentence, however, had a sting in it.

"Well, Kelly," said the teacher as the storm of merriment subsided, "I am pleased to see that you have used the apostrophe correctly, though it is unnecessary to make it as big as a comet. Now let us see why you were marked a failure in synonyms. Here is your paper":

The difference between the Savegery and barberism are a Savager is one who lets his hair grow wild a barberism is one who shaves his dome all except one bush so his enemy can lift his roof.

Another wave of delight greeted the reading.

"Now, Master Kelly, though your English cannot be said to be savage, it is certainly barbarous."

Johnnie had to write another composition; and most humiliating was the knowledge that Mr. Parks put the original in his pocket to show the other men teachers at noon.

Johnnie Kelly was not a ladies' man. He was at the stage where he considered girls beneath his notice. He found nothing attractive about them. They cried without cause, could not join in any real sport, and their presence in the room when the teacher was out always put a damper on things. Little had he dreamed, when Mr. Parks made him and Jack Van Zarn change seats this morning because Jack could not keep his eyes from Geo'gia's golden braids, that the change meant disaster.

Against Mr. Parks he had no resentment. "He gimme what was comin' to me, all *right*, ALL right!" the boy soliloquized. But here was one of the despised sex who had made him the laughing-stock of the class. Though naturally good-natured and sunny, he was sensitive. He wanted to be one of this community in which he had spent the past week. He liked these companions better than the Frog Hollow gang. Several strenuous hours had he and his mother spent since Friday in making ready his Monday-morning toilet that it might be in keeping with that of his comrades; and now, when a chit of a girl — even if others did think her pretty — called attention

to his linguistic peculiarities, he was bitterly resentful, for he quickly realized that it placed him on a low level in the estimation of both teacher and pupils.

Five minutes later, when the class had settled down and Mr. Parks had once more become engrossed in averaging marks for the month, Johnnie was able to voice his wrath under cover of the roar from the street below.

"Snitch!" he sneered as loudly as he dared. "Don't you think you put one over! — gettin' me laughed at by the whole class! If a feller'd done it, I'd — I'd — " As she was a girl, his tone was more reproving than threatening.

"Why, Johnnie," gasped the astonished maid, "Ah did n't think you 'ud care. Mr. Parks likes fun, and Ah reckoned you meant it for a good joke. You are always doing such funny things."

Her Southern drawl, her wide-open, deep-blue eyes, had no charm for the exasperated Johnnie. "A joke!" repeated the boy. "A joke? Hear me laugh: Ha, ha, ha!" There was certainly no merriment in his effort. It must have been louder than he thought, however, for Mr. Parks glanced around the class. Johnnie plunged his pen into the inkwell and almost put his nose on the composition paper before him in his effort to show attention to business.

The girl's tactics were quite different. She

made no pretense of writing. Putting her elbows on the desk, she rested her chin on clasped hands and held her eyes just above Mr. Parks's head until his scowl traveled along the row to Johnnie and then to her, when she dropped her gaze, and allowed herself to be surprised into a most winning smile. If Johnnie's hunchback attitude had aroused teacher's suspicions, the little lady's beaming countenance made him forget. Daniel Parks smiled back at her and resumed his labors. Wise little maid!

Johnnie spoke more cautiously: "I tell you it ain't no joke when Parks calls a feller a barbarism. And you done it. Any boob would 'a' knowed I was n't sweatin' to show him that last sentence. Only a skirt would 'a' done it."

"Ah reckon you are mad at me," observed Geo'gia, pouting ruefully.

"Yes, you bet! You've give me a beaut of a throw-down with Mr. Parks, and I'm goin' to git square if I can think of a way to git even with a dame. If you was a feller, I'd — but you ain't," he wound up sadly.

A boy whose whole personality bubbles with fun finds it hard to make others take him seriously. In fact, his very voice and manner refuse to assume the attributes of anger. Sunny-haired Geo'gia gave vent to a subdued laugh. "Oh, Johnnie," she whispered, "you are so funny."

The bell for classes to change rooms prevented Johnnie's framing any answer. During the remainder of the morning, as they traveled from history to grammar, from grammar to "gym," he ignored his enemy studiously. Every time he peeped at her she was eyeing him, and her face brightened, and she smiled.

He ransacked his brain for some way to get even. He thought of the many ways chewing-gum might be used in schemes of vengeance, but discarded them all. His first week's experience in this school had taught him such tricks were taboo. He must find something to match that which she had brought upon him, and even a little more. He had been humiliated before the class; so must she be.

Lunch hour came and went, and Johnnie's campaign was still unplanned. In boyish spite, the teacher being out of the room, Johnnie wrote on the board, "Jack kissed Jorger."

And then the boy learned a surprising lesson in human nature: every boy and girl in the class turned and laughed at Geo'gia, while Van Zarn was not even noticed. Indeed, Jack laughed with the rest. The irate young lady jumped up to the blackboard, wiped out the words, and completed retaliatory measures by dusting Master Kelly's newly pressed coat with the chalky board-rubber until he looked like a miller. She stepped back

to survey her handiwork, and out pealed her exasperating laugh.

“You are so funny, Johnnie,” she chuckled, and Johnnie’s momentary triumph lost all its pleasure. She seemed to be having a royal good time.

Off came the jacket; and in the coat-closet, with Mr. Parks’s clothes-brush, Johnnie managed to make the garment fairly presentable.

CHAPTER VII

GETTING EVEN WITH GEO'GIA

MR. PARKS came in late, and the news was whispered around that the teacher had a long report to make out and that classes would not change rooms for the afternoon. Johnnie grinned with satisfaction. He did not wish his teacher any hard luck, but the news meant that discipline would not be very strict. Johnnie would sit beside Geo'gia with plenty of time to "get square," *if* he could devise some scheme.

One wild thought came into his head: if the mere accusation of being kissed produced such a sensation, what would be the effect if she were actually smacked before the whole class? Brilliant thought! But who would do it? The boy shuddered. He, himself. Certainly not! The very notion was appalling. It would be as much a punishment to him as to her.

He knew he would not be laughed at, but the act of kissing he could not stand. When his cousins and aunts and other numerous female relations came to visit and succeeded in cornering him to "slobber on" him, as he expressed it, Master Johnnie invariably sneaked away quickly to wash his face. No, Johnnie was not yet of the

kissing age. As he was sure he could not bribe or induce any one else so to punish the irritating Miss Geo'gia, he gave up the idea.

Mr. Parks dictated an example — he must give the children something to keep them busy — but Johnnie was busy with his thoughts. He watched Geo'gia wrinkle her forehead and bite the end of her pencil. The boy was at his wit's end.

"Kelly, your answer?" came the voice of the teacher.

"I ain't there yet, Mr. Parks," he stammered.

Amid the snickers of the rest of the class sounded clearly that of Geo'gia, and Johnnie hastened to say, "I mean I did n't understand the problem."

The pedagogue surveyed the boy critically. The man could see that something was wrong with Kelly; but that report was too pressing; he must finish it, though the class be neglected.

"Listen, then," said the teacher. "If I sell a house for \$12,000 and lose twenty-five per cent, the \$12,000 is three fourths of the cost. If you know three fourths of the cost, can you find the whole cost, Johnnie?"

"I was n't payin' attention," Johnnie confessed, and flushed to the roots of his hair.

Geo'gia peeped at him slyly and winked. That settled it. If Johnnie could think up the most diabolical vengeance on earth — all except kiss-

ing; he was still not desperate enough for that — he would not hesitate to use it on the girl who gloated over his troubles.

The next problem found him ready: "A man sells two houses for \$2400 each. On one he loses twenty per cent, on the other he gains twenty per cent. Does he gain or lose by the whole transaction, and what per cent?"

Johnnie's face brightened with an idea. In his former school he had had problems of that type until he was sick of them. If Mr. Parks would keep at them long enough, Master Kelly felt confident he could involve Miss Geo'gia in trouble. Let the young lady be caught *receiving* answers, or let Mr. Parks believe that she had stooped to *giving* answers — equally disgraceful according to the code — and deep enough would be her humiliation. True, it would involve Johnnie himself; but he determined to face anything. First, however, he must lull her suspicions thoroughly, else she would probably not take the bait he offered. Instead of figuring, he printed a note on his paper and held it up behind the back of the boy in the seat before him so that the girl could read:

"The old skeeziks lost four per cent and it surved him right for doing such a crazy stunt."

The maid smiled and shook her head dubiously. She wrote: *"No gain or loss."*

While the rest of the class struggled with the example, Johnnie wrote again:

"Your stung. Betcher Noah caught his kids with that egsample on the ark."

"Those who have 'No gain or loss,' stand!" commanded the instructor.

Geo'gia rose with half the class and wriggled her tongue at Johnnie with unconcealed delight.

"You are all wrong," declared Mr. Parks, relieving the force of his tone by a whimsical smile. The children dropped into their seats. "'Four per cent loss' is correct. Those who have it, stand. — What! no one?"

Johnnie tried to grin and at the same time touch his nose with his tongue; but he did not rise. Geo'gia's knitted brows proved she was puzzled by her red-headed neighbor.

The teacher explained: "When he received \$2400 for one house, that was twenty per cent, or one fifth, less than the cost of that house, or four fifths of the cost. If \$2400 was four fifths of the cost, one fifth of the cost would be one fourth of \$2400, and five fifths, or the whole cost, would be five fourths of \$2400, which is \$3000. The other \$2400 was six fifths of the cost of the second house. Five fifths, or the cost of that house, would be five sixths of \$2400, or \$2000. He therefore paid \$3000 for one house, \$2000 for the other, or \$5000 for both, and sold them for

\$2400 plus \$2400, or \$4800. He lost \$200. Class, gain or loss is reckoned on what?"

"The cost!" responded the class with much energy.

"On what?" he repeated pedagogically.

"The cost!" shouted forty throats with increased emphasis.

"Not quite so loud, please. I'm in the same room with you. Now, \$200 on \$5000 is two fiftieths of the cost, or four per cent loss." As the teacher explained, he put the figures on the board.

"Oh," whispered Geo'gia as Mr. Parks turned to his desk to plan another problem, "you had it befo' and remembered the answer."

"Nope," Johnnie retorted. "I done it mental. Betcher dollar if he gives another like it I can tell you the answer with me arms folded."

"You can do all that in your head?" She pointed to the board.

Before he could answer, the next problem was given: "Mr. Doe sells two farms for \$3000 each. On one he realized a profit of twenty-five per cent. On the other he lost twenty-five per cent. What per cent does he gain or lose?"

"Six and one quarter loss," Johnnie whispered out of the corner of his mouth before most of the scholars could make a dozen figures.

Geo'gia was incredulous.

"*Betcher*," Johnnie printed.

Communication was indeed easy. Mr. Parks, fretting over a report on "Causes of non-promotion," was having trouble to separate adenoids from bad teeth.

Johnnie leaned over and repeated, "Betcher, betcher, betcher!"

"Oh, keep quiet," she begged, without raising her eyes from her work; but there was a flush of pleasure on her cheeks. "Ah can't figure when you do that. Is the cost of the first \$2400?"

"Want me to feed you with a spoon?" asked Johnnie sarcastically; but inwardly he rejoiced. The young lady was falling into his trap. Oh, if Mr. Parks would only look up and catch her asking for help!

She managed to finish the problem, and the teacher asked her for the answer.

"Six and one quarter per cent loss," replied the little Southerner, and she explained it satisfactorily.

In the counting of noses, Johnnie was again among the failures. He grinned and winked at Geo'gia and watched her expression as she viewed his paper, which had on it no figures except the answers. But there was another note:

"Don't work so hard. Put down the answer and we ull talk."

"That would be cheating," she whispered as she sat down.

"No, it would n't," he replied. "You know how to work 'em now. I'll tell you the answer."

Mr. Parks's head bobbed up and conversation stopped.

"What would we talk about?" whispered the girl when opportunity offered.

Still another problem of the same kind was assigned, so Johnnie, without the least compunction, with all the guile of an experienced campaigner, wrote two answers at once:

"You lose three and one quarter per cent I am going to talk about a angle."

"What kind of angle?" she wrote below her last example.

"A white one of coarse I would n't rite nothing bad."

"You mean ANGEL."

"I mean YOU."

Geo'gia stuck her tongue out at him, but her eyes were shining, and she hurried to work the problem neglected during the correspondence. She hardly dared accept Johnnie's proposal in its entirety, though little did she surmise the perfidious plan of the now soft-speaking Kelly. She got the correct answer, with a small proportion of the class. Still Johnnie had no work on his paper.

"What's the matter?" Geo'gia whispered.

"Nothin'."

"You've told me the right answer every time. Get up next time."

It was a hard example. She got the wrong answer twice because she threw away fractions of a cent; but at length she verified Johnnie's. Mr. Parks took some time to work it.

"Those who have one and three fifths per cent, stand."

Geo'gia stood. So did Johnnie. They were the only ones.

"Ah, Kelly," said the instructor, much delighted, "at last you have one. Explain."

Johnnie was tongue-tied.

"Let me see your work," commanded Mr. Parks.

"I have n't any," said Johnnie truthfully. He did not want those notes read.

"How did you get your answer?" The smile was gone from the face of Daniel Parks.

Johnnie stared straight over the head of the teacher at the figure of Sir Galahad.

"Let me see yours," Mr. Parks ordered the horror-struck girl.

She obeyed promptly. With her Southern breeding she knew nothing else to do, whatever the result. All the work of the example was on her paper, and also the fatal notes:

"What kind of angle?"

"You mean ANGEL."

The teacher looked from one to the other of the culprits. A suppressed giggle struggled to voice the hilarity of thirty-eight youngsters.

"Johnnie," Mr. Parks began, "you are not quite civilized yet. A barbarian is one in the middle status of culture between savagery and civilization. If a savage had wanted that answer, he would have gone for it with a club. A barbarian disregards the customs of polite society. He may not be so strenuous; but if he wants anything, he uses rather crude methods to obtain it. Don't be a barbarian, Johnnie."

The speech cut deep, for the class enjoyed it. But Johnnie was nerved to stand it, as long as Geo'gia got her share.

"As for you, my little angel — or rather, Johnnie's angel — you are not a new scholar, and you fully know our standards on giving and receiving help. I cannot tell you how much this hurts me. There must be some explanation."

Geo'gia was very pink. She tried to speak; her eyes were brimming with tears that she could not hold back. She looked at Johnnie, hopefully. Johnnie stared ahead and said nothing. His triumph had come; but somehow he felt contemptible. He gulped hard. For once in his life he found himself at a loss for words. And the girl, too overwrought to collect her wits, was also speechless.

And then the door opened to admit a boy with a note calling Mr. Parks to the room of the new lady teacher across the hall.

"I'll settle this case later," proclaimed the teacher. "Class, page 242, example sixteen." And he hastened out.

Hardly had the door closed before Geo'gia snatched an all-felt board-rubber from the chalk-rail, and amid the laughing encouragement of "Go to it, angel!" from delighted classmates, she proceeded thoroughly to powder Johnnie's red head, winding up with a lusty, dusty wipe across the mouth. Down she sat and started to work example sixteen, while little Max Schuler kicked up his heels higher than his desk in his happy excitement, and even the most sedate young ladies in the class rocked with merriment.

Johnnie's feelings underwent a rapid change. He had been considering himself the meanest rascal in Manhattan, but her attack goaded him to the extreme. The girl must endure the most terrible punishment he could think of, though he himself died in the act. He rose deliberately and took a deep breath. He put a freckled hand under her chin and tilted back her head. The next instant a wild shout of glee went up from the spectators — to stop short, for Mr. Parks was standing in the doorway.

Even had he not witnessed the closing scene,



He put a freckled hand under her chin and tilted back her head

there could have been no doubt in his mind as to what had happened. Tipped at a sharp angle across Geo'gia's trembling lips was a replica in chalk of Johnnie's mouth, and a white spot as big as a dime showed where his nose had touched. Without this, there was circumstantial evidence in the fact that Johnnie Kelly's face was bent low over his desk, and he was the only boy busy with example sixteen.

Mr. Parks contemplated the pair for some time, struggling to keep from laughing. "I'll see both of you at three o'clock. Kelly, wipe off your face and take a seat in the last aisle."

To the shamefaced miss he said nothing, but directed the giggling girls to locate for her the telltale chalk. Judging by her expression, she would have preferred a good scolding.

Happiness was not Johnnie's portion. He wore no smile the rest of the afternoon. He ignored the whispered taunts from Max and Victor and Jack and a dozen others. Izzy Cohen, even, had his laugh, and Izzy seldom laughed. Even the brazen Jack's question, "Hey, barbarian, how's your angel?" failed to get a rise out of the Irish lad. He was too low-spirited to resent anything.

At three, he and Geo'gia remained.

"Work this problem, both of you," directed the teacher:

"I sell two factories for \$36,500 each, gaining ten per cent on one, losing ten per cent on the other. What per cent do I gain or lose on the — "

"You lose one per cent," interrupted Johnnie.

Mr. Parks worked it out. In three minutes and thirty seconds he threw back his head. "By George!" he exploded.

With a superior air, the boy looked over his teacher's shoulder. "You're right; try another," said he condescendingly.

They tried several, and Johnnie never took longer than twenty seconds.

"How do you do it?" Mr. Parks was obliged to ask.

"Well," said Johnnie, scratching his head, "I don't know why it is, but no matter what sum of money you give, if you multiply the two per cents together it will give you the per cent of the answer, and it's always a loss. It won't work if you use a different per cent for the gain from the one for a loss."

For fifteen minutes Mr. Parks did problems and cudgeled his brain to figure out the why; but perhaps he was rusty in his higher mathematics, for he had to give it up. In the meanwhile, Johnnie supervised his teacher's work paternally, and Geo'gia kept her eyes on the floor.

"It's so," the teacher admitted. "Then she did not show you the answer? Come, you are

holding something back, both of you. Tell me about it."

"I told her the answers," confessed the boy, "but she done all the figurin'." He was not proud of his work now. "She got me in trouble this morning, you know, and I wanted to git even."

Then the young miss blazed out: "He's just as mean as he can be, Mr. Parks. Won't you please make him stop? Ah just want him to let me alone, and Ah'm sure Ah'll never bother him any mo'. He's — he's a bar-bar-barian, that's what he is."

"I ain't no barbarian, neither," protested Johnnie, appealing to Mr. Parks. "You don't think I kissed her because I wanted to, do yer?" It was with an injured air, respectful, even eager for a denial.

Daniel Parks caught his breath. It took him several seconds to adjust himself to the attitude of a thirteen-year-old boy of Johnnie's type toward the subject of osculation.

"Kelly" — he must end the thing quickly or he would laugh in the faces of the two rueful youngsters — "I shall change your seat, and I want you to promise me never to annoy Geo'gia again."

"Sure," responded Johnnie. "I'm sorry I kissed her. I was so hoppin' mad I did n't care what I done. I don't like any one makin' fun o'

my talkin', Mr. Parks. I can't talk no better. But I played her a fierce trick, and I'll never kiss her no more."

"I'm sure neither Geo'gia nor I will hold you up to ridicule, Johnnie, hereafter, if you don't invite it. Get your hat and go home now."

As Master Kelly disappeared down the staircase, three steps at a time, one hand trying to loosen that abominable collar from his throat, Geo'gia dropped into a seat, her head on her arm, and broke into tears.

"Now, don't cry," protested the teacher; "he will not annoy you any more. He'll do just what I told him to do."

"Tha — that's just it," sobbed the maid. "Nun — now he'll never speak to me again!"

And Mr. Daniel Parks sank helplessly into his chair.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LALLAPALOOSA

AT ten minutes past one the next day, along the third-floor corridor raced Johnnie Kelly with weary legs and doubting heart. What punishment for being late would Mr. Parks decree? To recompense him Johnnie had not even the thrill of successful adventure. When he had bolted down Amsterdam Avenue after the fire-engines with the rest of the crowd, visions of raging flames and billows of smoke, of hair-raising rescues to witness and burned people to enjoy, had spurred on his spidery legs long after his less persistent comrades had given up and started back for the school building. He alone of all Public School 199 had reached the scene of action, only to find the remains of a burned hair sofa in the gutter and a small boy amplifying to an open-mouthed group of companions the meager details. None of the crowd belonged to 199, the firemen were gone, and the whole thing was a fizzle. Having run his heart out for thirty blocks, hopes high of witnessing a thriller, Johnnie had not been stirred to interest by the bragging of a notoriety-seeking youngster.

Straight for room 306 the auburn-topped Kelly staggered, breathing like a spent fire-horse.

"Boy, will you come here a minute?" It was a woman's pleasant voice that brought him to a halt. In the doorway of 305 stood a bright-faced young lady not quite as tall as he; a new teacher, Johnnie was sure, because the mean old fuss that had occupied the room a few days before had reported him for turning handsprings in the hall. The new one had a hand protectingly on the shoulder of a forlorn specimen from sunny Sicily, and smiled encouragement as Johnnie eyed her sharply.

"You see," she said as he came forward suspiciously, "I can't leave my class, and little Tony wants to wash his face and hands. — Don't you, Tony?"

"Yare," responded the specimen unenthusiastically; "wanta you washa me yourseluf."

"But Miss Bouck can't go with you, Tony; but — but — What is your name?" she asked Johnnie. Johnnie told her — "But Johnnie, here, will show you just where to wash. You'll do that for Miss Bouck, won't you, Tony dear?"

Tony dear had objections. He sniffled, and big tears began to irrigate the soil on his face. He rubbed the drops away with a grimy hand, producing a wonderful cubist effect that delighted Master Kelly immensely until it was

evident from the shake of her head that Miss Bouck did not want such an exhibition of joy in the presence of the child. Tony clung to teacher's skirt. However, she cuddled him into submission.

"Johnnie, don't let him put those — those hands on top of the sanitary drinking-fountain."

"It won't hurt him," puffed Johnnie — he had not yet caught his wind — "I've done it lots o' times."

"What? — and people drink there afterward?"

"Sure! 'T ain't the same water."

The diminutive teacher of room 305 changed the subject, and gave Kelly his orders.

Five minutes later he brought his charge back. She was still controlling the class from the open doorway.

"I done the best I kin, Miss Bouck," apologized the assistant, "but the dirt's crawled into the holes an' I can't coax it out no matter how hard I whistle."

"What?" A smile of delight lit up her face, and Johnnie was surprised to see such white, even, small teeth.

"I mean whistlin' is just as good as plain water. Gee! betcher if we t'rowed him up against the ceilin', he'd stick."

Soft and catchy was her laugh, and Johnnie laughed, too. He could not explain how he knew it, but she was laughing *with* him, instead of *at*

him, as did most people. And the room windows were plainly reflected in her big, brown eyes.

"Then we must get some soap, Johnnie," she declared, including him so adroitly by her manner as well as her speech that Johnnie felt a thrill of pleasure. Here was a friend at last!

She turned to survey her pupils. In a school of fifty classes and two thousand cosmopolitan children, even in a select neighborhood, there are some dregs. The "1 A's" in Number 199 had been divided — at the earnest solicitation of the senior teacher of the grade — so that the novice had about half her fifty infants drawn from the cheaper tenements of the district.

"Are all foreign children as — as queer as these, Johnnie?"

This was an extraordinary question. No other teacher had ever consulted Master Kelly. She must be from a different mould.

"You mean wops an' kikes?"

"Wops and kikes!" she repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Dagoes and sheenies, o' course," replied Johnnie, gazing at this queer kind of pedagogue; and his study opened his eyes to the wavy, brown hair and the pink, pink cheeks.

The new teacher stepped nearer. "Johnnie, you will not laugh at me when I tell you I'm very, very green — "

"You're Irish, too?" cried the delighted boy, holding out his hand. "Put it there!"

She took his hand good-humoredly. "No; I mean I'm from Schoharie County — the country — and there are lots of New York words that I do not understand."

She looked so straight at him that Johnnie had to peer right into her eyes; and he could see way, way into them, and he liked it.

"Dagoes is — is — ginneys — Eyetalians," he explained, "and sheenies is Yiddishers. But some on 'em is as clean as y — as me."

Her quiet laugh was contagious and inviting. It made Johnnie comfortably at ease, and his usual loquacity returned. He wanted her to keep on laughing and looking at him so.

"Most o' them is as good as me," he added loyally, for his big, warm heart knew no nationality, no creed. He was as ready to discover humor in one race as in another. "I'm laughed at, meself, in school, you know," he declared, though he did not admit how the experience hurt, "so I kin laugh at the wops, s'long as I ain't mean about it."

"Will folks laugh at me for being countrified?" she asked, partly in earnest.

"Not if you don't try to steal second. Just hug your base an' let the other batters shove you around."

"You certainly puzzle me with your language," she admitted. "I don't know what you are talking about."

"Never mind," said Johnnie. "I'll come over some afternoon, if you'll let me, and give you lessons. But you won't never git laughed at like me an' the wops. Good-lookers kin git away with anythin'."

The pretty teacher laughed and blushed at the compliment.

"I started to tell you," Johnnie pursued; "most of 'em is as good as me, but lots is awful funny. They had a mothers' meetin' once over in the school I come from, an' Miss Green, the kindygarden teacher, got the lend o' me to help pass the eats. Gee! the costoo-mes them wops had on was screams! — wrappers, an' kimonies, an' dresses with grand cabbages all over 'em, an' such colors! — like the gardens in front o' them glass do-mes over by Bronx Park. An' that proud they held their noses in the air — but, for that matter, if me own nose had been where any one o' theirs was, I'd 'a' held it up, too — or stopped it up."

Seeing the shocked countenance of the little lady, Johnnie hastened to explain, "They spilt so much bum cologne on 'emselves, it smelt like a barber shop had a fight with a delicatessen."

She laughed once more, and Johnnie got an-

other good look at those teeth. And naturally, he had to be quite near, else he might be overheard by the class; and he discovered not a freckle nor the tiniest blemish on her whole lovely face. She seemed fresh from a doll factory. On her upper lip there were no hairs like his mother's, and her lips were just as red, and curvy! and not stretched tight like those of the science-music-gym teacher, old Sally Primton.

"Most o' them wore curtain rings in their ears," he continued, "and bits o' brass pipe on their fingers. There was a cartload o' glass sprinkled over their clothes." — He noticed Miss Bouck wore no jewelry whatever. — "Well, after the speech-makin' by the prince —"

"The prince? — What prince?"

"The principal. — We trotted out coffee and cake. I hope to choke to death on grammar if one o' them wops had ever tasted coffee! When the cream and sugar come around, they stopped their jabber an' looked scared. Then one bold, fat she-dago — or is it dagoess? — I don't know me femy-nines — the wife of a section boss on the subway-diggin' — she takes a handful o' sugar and dumps 'em into her cup until the lumps stuck out like a island in the center; an' ev'ry one else done the same, Miss Green too kerflumixed to flag it. O' course, the poor things could n't drink the stuff.

"I whispers, 'Nex' time let's give 'em mackyrooney,' an' we done it."

Johnnie leaned against the door-jamb and shook with silent merriment; and Miss Bouck's eyes sparkled with amusement and he could see her teeth most of the time, now.

"Yer should 'a' seen 'em, Miss Bouck. They took the stuff up in their fin-gers, opened their mouths like suckers after worms and dropped the long, slippery things down their throats — Gee! I seen Professor Garlico — or some such wop name — swally a swored down at Cooney Island once; an' now I know it ain't such a hard job for him. If he don't practice on mackyrooney, I'll bet my chances for bein' kep' in this afternoon. — Say!" Johnnie interrupted himself, and sobered down. He contemplated the closed door of 306. "Say, Miss Bouck, won't you gi' me a pass tellin' Mr. Parks how you kep' me in to help you?"

Miss Bouck's eyes narrowed wisely. "You rascal!" she laughed, pinching his cheek playfully; "you want me to get into trouble?"

"Honest injun, did n't you hold me up?" demanded Johnnie.

"I'll say you were late and I made you later. Will that do?" She said it mischievously, and he was quick to take advantage.

"Ah, come on," he coaxed; "please!"

“Will you promise to come over this afternoon and wash with soap and water before the class to show them how?”

It was Johnnie's turn to be shocked.

“I — I — Gee!”

“Afraid of soap?”

“I'll wash me face an' neck an' hands, but that's all. I've had me bath.”

Flustered in turn was Miss Bouck, and her face grew red.

“That's what I meant,” she said hastily.

Thus it was that about an hour later Johnnie peeled off coat, tie, and Galahad collar, and rolled up his sleeves before the fifty youngsters occupying the little hinged seats in the 1 A room.

He soaped himself until he looked like a cotton bulb, and splashed and sputtered water in a wide circle around him; but the height of loyalty was reached when he allowed the lady with the big, soft eyes to pour kerosene on his hair, and passed around the room for certain delinquent ones to smell.

“You see,” Johnnie explained after school, his head over the basin in the men-teachers' room at the end of the hall and Mr. Daniel Parks's powerful hands strenuously working to shampoo the odor from the carrotty bristles, “they shy at bein' clean, like me at the Meetric System; don't ketch on a-tall, an' can't see no use of it.”

"We all prefer 'to walk in trodden paths,'" observed the teacher, half to himself; and with a dexterous twist he pushed the hero's head under the running water, and held it there in spite of frantic struggles.

Johnnie came up gasping, yet unresentful, his thoughts too pleasant to be drowned even by such treatment.

"Say, I wonder if she t'inks a feller washes like that ev'ry day!" The corners of Johnnie's mouth drooped comically. "But, Gee!" — wiping the soap from his eyes — "I'd do it again for her!"

"Why Miss Bouck particularly?"

"Huh! ain't she a looloo?" Johnnie paused in surprise at his instructor's lack of acuteness.

"I don't know, not having seen her; but what is a 'looloo'?"

"Ah! you're on," grinned the youth. "I'd let HER squoit kerrysene on me head all day, if she wanted ter. Why don't they git her kind to teach us big ones? We'd all be good for HER. Jist t'ink how we gotter squint all day long at old Sally Primton!"

"Please, Johnnie, don't let people think I teach you such language. You will shame me before a superintendent some day."

"Tag, I'm it. But I'll can it. Anyway, she's a lallapaloosa!" And the boy wondered why the teacher shook his head hopelessly.

“Say, d’yer know she’s that Bill Fillum’s niece?”

“What! Gilfillan’s niece?”

“Sure! Betcher nickel.”

“Never mind, I’ll take your word for it.”

Pretty teachers were not a novelty to Johnnie. At the age of six he had had one; but she spent much time in front of the mirror in her locker door, and she always held her head too high for Johnnie ever to get a good look into her eyes. Again in his seven years’ school career he had had another good-looking teacher, but whenever she opened her mouth her words did not sound pretty; she talked too much in the language of the boys on the block. Miss Bouck, on the other hand, looked a fellow in the eye, and all her words were nice words. And pretty? It was better than an ice-cream soda just to get a good look at her face!

Johnnie went home pleased with the whole world. Max Schuler followed him for two blocks shouting, “Bar — bay — re — an! Bar — bay — ree — a-a-an!” but Johnnie only laughed and stuck his fingers up to his nose at the little tease.

CHAPTER IX

WASHING THE WOP

AT half-past eight the next morning he slipped past the monitors at the foot of the stairs and hurried to the novice's room. His suit was carefully brushed, the toes of his red shoes freshly polished — bother the heels! — and his hair, sopping wet, was plastered down carefully in front. His topknot still stood up like a shaving-brush, for, of course, he could not see that in the family mirror. He had got away with his gorgeous red tie without his mother's catching him, and now he stopped on the stairway to put it on.

Hardly did he exchange greetings with his new friend before Mr. Parks's voice boomed in the doorway.

"Well, Miss Bouck, how fares the battle?"

Johnnie eyed his preceptor doubtfully, and remarked under his breath to a gaping little Italian in a front seat, "Say, would n't that bump your funny-bone?"

He watched a flush mount the cheeks of the 1 A teacher.

She was startled, but recovered and, smiling, reported, "Thank you, the enemy are reduced

to a handful; but that handful seem firmly entrenched."

She surveyed the little ones before her, and her smile vanished. Johnnie followed her gaze. There was many a sweater in lieu of underwear and coat; for a sweater is the garment that can be worn longest without its falling apart, and no one thinks of washing it. One youngster wore the top of a pink pajama suit; while another sported a swallow-tail coat, the sleeves doubled over themselves until the cuffs touched the armpits, the tails tied around the waist and held there by a lady's glass-bead buckle.

Johnnie wrinkled his nose in disgust, but straightened it out when he caught sight of the strange expression in the little woman's face — an expression akin to the tender look sometimes bestowed upon him by his mother.

"Tony Crito, come here, dear," she requested gently.

Out stepped a pair of man's amputated breeches. Six inches of suspender over the shoulder of a ragged, green sweater held the nether garment up under the armpits of a frowzy, beady-eyed Italian of seven, so one could just see the white strings wound around the tops of his dilapidated shoes. It was Johnnie's friend of the day before. She turned him around slowly for inspection. That this was poor judgment was

apparent at once. Confidence in the frail threads still striving to hold the back suspender-button was, to Johnnie's mind, much misplaced; and seeing by a gap in the rear elevation what would be the result of the impending catastrophe, he breathed a sigh of relief when she hastily directed the tenant of the trousers to a front seat and addressed her remarks to him there: "Tony, I fear you have not taken a bath."

"Yes-a ma'am," whined Tony.

"But you don't look as if you had. Did you get into the bathtub?"

"No can use-a der tub."

"Why not?"

He hung his head. Johnnie, who had started inquiries of a small urchin in a front seat, paused to explain behind the back of his hand, "Lots o' the ginneys use the tub for a coal-bin," and Tony's silence was a confession.

"Tell your mother to use a basin," suggested Helen.

"No got-a der basin," blubbered the child.

"Use anything," said teacher desperately.

Johnnie's confidential tone broke in, while he pointed to the pale specimen he had just interrogated, "Angelo says his mother washed him with the coal-pail."

The pretty lady was saved the necessity of commenting on Angelo's bath by Tony's wails

of "Smell-a me! Smell-a me!" which invitation she and Mr. Parks promptly accepted, only to find the child's head soaked with cheap perfume.

"How did your mother bathe you?" teacher asked.

The urchin explained, his voice rising from a mere whisper to a howl of terror as he stared at the big man scowling down upon him and there gradually percolated into his mind a horrible suspicion regarding the significance of this ogre's presence: "She put-a me on der floor o' der kitch'n. She t'row-a der pail o' wart on-a me, den — den — she sweep-a out der kitch!"

Mr. Parks laughed aloud; but to Kelly's surprise, the woman, cognizant only of the horror-stricken face of the infant, dropped to her knees with an impulsive exclamation of pity and drew the frightened child to her breast, soothing him with soft, inarticulate syllables that only she and the child comprehended.

Open-mouthed, thrilled, stood Johnnie. Then, a glance revealing that his own teacher had slipped out, Master Kelly unceremoniously fled.

Thursday morning, Johnnie, on the pretense of sharpening pencils, was again enjoying the company of the sweet lady in the 1 A room when, notwithstanding the regulation forbidding visitors in a classroom without the permission of the principal, an indignant Sicilian reached the

door dragging behind her Tony Crito and his wonderful trousers. The woman herself would attract more than passing notice; for, to impress teacher, she had arrayed herself in a pink opera-cloak and green head-gear modeled upon the classic lines of the cuspidor inverted.

"Titcher," exploded this apparition, "Tony — me hees sister-law — hees brudder my man — he say you tell-a heem he no clean."

"He should wash every day," was the evasive reply.

"He no need-a dat," protested the visitor.

Helen took the youngster by the chin and gingerly turning his face, pointed to unmistakable discolorations."

"No dirt," insisted the relative; "he clean-a like-a me," a statement undeniable.

"Yes, dirt," declared Helen desperately.

"No — o — o!" whined the other in a half-crying falsetto; "it no come off — that color of hees skin."

Helen Bouck was forced to the last extremity. It must be said. "But he does n't smell clean," said she in as low a tone as she could.

"You smell-a heem?" cried the brother's wife; "you smell-a my brudder-law?" She snuffed the cologned head audibly, and turned her back upon the teacher. "He smell-a plenty for me." She wrinkled up her nose in disgust. "Ef he no

smell-a 'nuff for you, clean-a heem yourself." And she marched from the room.

Johnnie's jaw set, his fists clenched. Here was a task for the Irish. He took two strides after her — and found his way blocked by the flushed, smiling Helen.

"Never mind, Johnnie. 'Clean-a heem yourself!' That was funny." She paused, her face brightening. "Why not?" — and Kelly found her surveying him. "Not I, of course," with a laugh, "but you! Ask Mr. Parks if you may."

Mr. Parks responded with alacrity, coming over himself to superintend, though the messenger insisted that it was not necessary.

"Johnnie," said the man, "we'll clean this boy." — Johnnie knew that "we" meant "Johnnie Kelly." — "Take him to the men-teachers' room at the end of the hall" — a howl from the dark-skinned brother-in-law — "you'll find soap and towels in my locker where they were the other day. I'll send a boy out for a scrubbing-brush."

"Save your change," said Johnnie; "there's a scrub-brush in the janitor's pail under the hall sink."

"No, no!" cried Helen in alarm; "that's a floor-brush."

"I won't hurt it," promised Johnnie; but she prevailed.

After some coddling she succeeded in coaxing Tony to submit. However, it was with the affront of the opera-cloaked visitant rankling in his breast that Kelly led to the bath the perfumed Tony. This was not cleaning up the enemy in the sense Johnnie would have desired, but it was service for the pretty teacher.

Sometime later Johnnie returned, his clothes somewhat moist. His face assumed a puzzled expression at sight of the two pedagogues in the hallway busily talking.

"Kin I have some needle an' t'read?" he asked in a stage-whisper; and seeing the look of inquiry on his preceptor's face, he added, "I had to cut the clothes off'n the kid."

"What?" exclaimed the man incredulously.

"That's straight. They sews 'em up for the winter, an' begins to peel when the robins come."

He got the needle and thread without further parley.

At length down the hall came Johnnie Kelly, urging on a reluctant figure in commodious trousers. And they were safe trousers, now; for on that one dangerous suspender button, Johnnie had used thread enough to last until Tony grew to fit his trousers. And Johnnie had done something more. He had not forgotten "sister-law's" defiance; hence unrelentingly had he dealt vengeance for the insult to the little ruler of 1 A.

The right side of Tony's face was immaculate; but the other half was untouched.

"See-meetrically divided down the middle," declared the artist proudly. "It was a cinch on his face, but the rest o' the way I had to chalk him off." He exhibited a piece of green chalk and pointed to the beginning of a line on the victim's neck.

"Take him back and wash the other half," commanded Mr. Parks. The voice softened as Johnnie hung his head: "Johnnie, how quickly you forget! You, above all others, ought to know how it feels when one even imagines he is being ridiculed."

Still, it was Helen that gave poor Johnnie the crushing blow. He saw it coming when that familiar look of compassion, that look so much like his mother's, spread over her sweet face and she made a motion to take the son of Italy in her arms. She drew back; and as the crestfallen hero turned to escort his charge away for another half-hour of the strenuous life, he heard her say:

"Poor little souls! Shall we punish them for their parents' ignorance, born of poverty and poor government? — I fear I take it all too much to heart. I was not cut out to be a teacher."

The boy swung around to extenuate his deed; but stopped with his mouth open, for Daniel Parks, 7 B, was standing very close to Helen

Bouck, 1 A, and the pair were looking into each other's eyes.

"No, you were not meant to be a teacher," said the man.

Johnnie flopped against the wall and, before he realized what he was saying, blurted out dejectedly, "Huh! I'm cut out! *Some* jolt, believe ME!"

The remark jolted the man and the woman apart hurriedly. It shocked Johnnie himself. Three flushed countenances faced one another in that hallway.

Johnnie recovered himself first. Grabbing Tony by the hand, he yanked the youngster down the corridor.

"Soives me right," he muttered. "That's what I git for lettin' on what a peacherino she is. — An' I washed her wop!"

CHAPTER X

BARBARIAN

JOHNNIE KELLY felt that it was not his fault. The overripe tomato would not have squashed against the ear of the organ-grinder had not Jack Van Zarn dodged. Besides, no organ-grinder had any right to be on the street as early as the first of April no matter how warm the weather.

However, neither Johnnie nor Jack cared to stay and explain to the excited musician; and Victor Caluchie, who just happened to be in the vicinity, also broke into a run from force of habit. He had learned that whenever a boy did something that made a get-away advisable, it behooved every boy of thrashable age within range to seek other scenes. And once Victor started, his fate became linked with that of Jack and Johnnie. He dared not stop.

Being youths of experience, the three led the enemy neither toward home nor toward school, but lit out for the Riverside Drive wall, the outraged Hungarian close behind; while the woman with the red bandanna guarding the organ expressed her sentiments so vigorously that it was fortunate the language was not English. The hunted lost themselves among the freight-cars

down by the Hudson, and the furious pursuer finally gave up the chase. Never again in the flesh did he bother the trio; but, like the ghost of Cæsar, he was destined to mould events in the checkered career of Brutus Kelly.

That tomato Johnnie had borrowed from the outdoor stand of a grocer up the avenue and had carried in his pocket for five blocks, waiting for the first classmate who dared hoot the derisive "Barbarian!" Jack Van Zarn had not counted on being blocked by a big organ with drums and cymbals and a crowd of little gaping brats around it. The combination of circumstances brought about the casualty.

Altogether, it was a lucky escape, and the three sat down by the river and laughed and punched one another gleefully.

"Gee! was n't it bully?" panted Johnnie.

"Bet your boots!" Jack agreed.

"Sure!" added Victor. "Fine bunch o' cuss-words!" The organ-grinder evidently knew more English than his spouse.

"Gee!" said Johnnie.

"Gee!" echoed Jack.

Each of the three repeated extracts from the organ-grinder's language, and all snickered and looked around to be sure no one was near enough to overhear.

"It would be wicked for us to say those things



Lit out for the Riverside Drive Wall, the outraged Hungarian close behind

really to ourselves," Jack opined after a particularly frightful phrase, "but, of course, it's all right when we're only telling what the organ-grinder said."

"Huh!" observed Johnnie, "I would n't want me father to hear me repeatin' — he would n't understand the dif. Say, Victor, dja see me jump down offen the wall? Most twenty feet — was n't it, Vic?"

"Sure," said Victor.

"That's nothing," retorted Jack. "I jumped a higher place 'an you — must 'a' been thirty feet. Was n't it, Vic?"

"Sure," responded the accommodating Victor.

"Dja see me hit 'im, though, right in the listener?" bragged Johnnie. "That's what started all the fun. Did n't it look funny runnin' down his collar like blood? Gee!"

"Sure," was Victor's enlivening contribution.

"Bum-thrower," declared Jack, who had no idea of letting Johnnie carry off the honors of the day.

"T'anks — an' champeen bum-thrower, too," said Johnnie.

"Whatd'yermean, 'champion bum-thrower'?"

"Huh! Read the papers how they're fightin' in Europe, throwin' bums at each other? Each army digs a ditch like for a sewer. Then, of course, they can't shoot at each other, so they

have a lot o' baseballs full o' dynamite. A soldier takes up one, lights a fuse on it like is on a fire-cracker, an' jist as it's ready to bust, he heaves it over into the other feller's sewer. It's the latest way o' killin' the other side now."

"He means 'bombs,'" explained Victor, whose language was in many respects superior to Kelly's.

"That may be the Eyetalian way, but 'bums' is English — ain't it, Jack?"

Jack raised a deprecating hand. "All right, *all* right! Call it anything, but you're a bum bum-thrower, believe ME."

"Ye-e-es!" Johnnie sneered. "If that termater was a bum, where'd that organ-grinder be now, huh?"

"G'wan!" growled Jack; "you did n't aim at him. A *girl* can hit something that way. You ain't champeen bum-thrower — I am champeen bum-dodger. Hey, Vic, ain't I?"

"Sure," said Victor.

"Betcher can't hit that freight-car door with a brick from here twice together," Jack pursued.

"Betcher dassent stand by the car and leave me heave three rocks at yer," retorted Johnnie. "That'll prove if you're champeen dodger."

There were no bricks in the neighborhood, and there was no intention of handling rocks; but

“bricks” and “rocks” are synonymous with “pebbles” and “small stones” in boys’ parlance.

“If it was snowballs, I’d let you peg at me,” said Jack.

Johnnie leaped to his feet, fairly shouting with excitement. “See here, fellers, if we only jist get one more snow, we’ll have a fight like the real thing in Europe, and we’ll find out who’s champeen bum-thrower and champeen bum-dodger. Is it a go?”

“Sure,” agreed Victor.

“Shake on it,” said Johnnie.

“That’s bully,” assented Jack; “but I guess there’ll be no more snow this year. It’s too late.”

“Afraid so,” Johnnie spoke ruefully; “organ-grinder’s sure sign o’ spring.”

“Blankety-blank the first of April!” Jack spat out devilishly, and he felt real wicked in saying it.

Then down in the shelter of a pile of rocks lay the trio, Victor, Johnnie, and Jack — sons, respectively, of an Italian assistant to an apartment-house janitor, an Irish-New York policeman, and a Congressman whose forebears fought in the American Revolution. There they lolled, and rehearsed the whole incident, and bragged, and exaggerated, and lied, and quarreled once more over the honors, and became faster friends thereby, and had a bully time. It is a boy’s

inalienable right to color the high lights of his career to suit his own personal taste; and twenty years hence the version of the adventure which will be true to the three will be the one they developed by the riverside that glorious afternoon. It is the enviable heritage of youth. As the boy grows up he loses the power, not to exaggerate, but to make himself believe that his adventures really happened as he pretends they did and wishes they had.

Well was it that they had their pleasure that afternoon, for there was a sequel.

Miss Primton, departmental teacher of music, science, and physical training to all classes from 7 A to 8 B, had witnessed the initial shocking episode. At four o'clock the next afternoon the three boys came out of school in single file, lock-step, Johnnie in the lead, all reciting with unconcealed pleasure her characterization of them: "Loafers! *Loafers!!* LOAFERS!!!"

The discovery of a common enemy had cemented their friendship forever. Johnnie was one of the "gang" at last!

"Gee horsefat!" cried Johnnie. "Got ter stay in every afternoon fer a week!"

"She's an old butt-in!" added Jack.

"'T was n't her organ-grinder," grumbled Johnnie.

"Did n't sound like it," laughed Jack.

"She'd 'a' disowned him if she'd heard him."

"Big stiff!" was Victor's comment.

"Do you think she'd keep me in for a month till four if I done anythin' else, like she says she will?" asked Johnnie.

"Sure," answered Victor.

"She don't bluff. She'd do it, all right, *all* right," Jack assured them.

"But she ain't got no right to keep a feller in for somethin' — for somethin' he done out o' school."

"Tell HER that," chuckled Jack; which settled the subject conclusively.

Then all shouted once more in chorus, "Loafers! *Loafers!!* LOAFERS!!!"

As they parted for the day, Jack admonished: "Don't forget, fellers, to rub your old lamps and wish for a good old snow."

Whereat Johnnie and Victor promptly responded, "Sure!"

CHAPTER XI

BUM-THROWERS

AND one day a week later, a few days after the United States declared war against Germany, it snowed. With a battered high silk hat concealed under his jacket, brick-top Kelly, 7 B, stole cautiously into the school-yard. The door to the visitors' stairway was just closing upon Mr. Parks, the teacher in charge, and an irate gentleman who was protesting in no mild language. The youngsters in the yard were in a hubbub of excitement. Johnnie had no time, however, to wait there.

On account of his size he had no difficulty in overawing the monitor at the foot of one of the boys' stairways. Two steps at a time — now and then three — he started for the top floor. Part-way up he stopped to draw out from beneath his coat that poor silk hat and contemplate it gloomily. He shoved his hand inside the crown to get it back into shape. He rubbed the silk on his coat-sleeve. It was hopeless. That particular tile was beyond redemption.

“Gee!” The exclamation was weighted with dejection and foreboding. He resumed his hasty ascent.

On the top floor he tiptoed along the corridor to the office of the principal. He stuck his head around the casing of the door to the anteroom. He was too late. The clerk was at her desk; and though the door to the inner sanctum was partly closed, he could see that Mr. Hartley himself was there. Furthermore, not better than a dozen strides ahead of Kelly was a red-headed man in a red-headed temper, who, paying no attention to the clerk, pushed open the principal's door with a bang.

In no mild tones the man demanded, "Can I get justice in this school?"

Johnnie drew back a bit at the fearful sound. He could feel the brush of fiery hair on the top of his head stand out even stiffer — it fairly crackled. He recognized the voice of Mr. Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan.

"I do not wish a seat," snapped the President of the Parents' Association. "I am going for to have one of your b'ys arrested."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Mr. Gilfillan. What has he been doing?"

"I was passing alongside that board fence up the avenue here when a b'y pelted me with a snowball and ruined my silk hat."

Mr. Gilfillan drew the tile from behind his back. It was caved in like a tomato-can in a back lot.

Johnnie looked at the hat in his own hand, and shook his head hopelessly.

"I chased him into the school-yard; and your gang of hoodlums blocked my way as I attempted for to catch him, and they tried to trip me up. Your chief tough, the mon teacher in charge of the yard, ordered me out."

"And you then came up to me?"

"Well, I told him what I thought of him; and he told me to get out or he'd put me out. I told him I'd like to see him try."

"So should I," commented Mr. Hartley with a conciliatory smile, surveying the man before him; "you'd be a pretty stiff proposition even for Mr. Parks."

Mr. Gilfillan grew redder, if such were possible.

"He would not have succeeded if he had not taken me unawares," he maintained. "When I shook my fist in his face, he caught my arm; and the next I knew it was tucked under his left arm and he had a leverage on it with his right that would have cracked the bones like pipe-stems if I had n't let him lead me to the foot of your stairs. He told me to walk up four flights, and make my complaint to you. I've been treated scandalously — I, the President of the Parents' Association of this school. And your attitude shows me I need expect no satisfaction here. I will carry this to the B'ard — yes, to the Mayor,

if necessary." The red-headed temper was in full control.

Johnnie's knees suddenly became none too stable. He longed for a chair, but flattened himself against the wall and listened in dread fascination.

"That was pretty hard on you, was n't it?" observed the veteran principal, not for an instant taking his eyes from the irate visitor, nor allowing his voice to lose its even tenor. "Those boys in the yard, when they saw you chasing one of their fellows, should have made way for you and let you catch him. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do," responded Mr. Gilfillan decisively.

"And my teacher in charge of the yard should have permitted you to assault any one of the children under his protection that you, in your anger, should select."

"You argue well. I may have been out of temper, but I knew the culprit. I'd make no mistake. Anyhow, I want to go around your classrooms and find the b'y that smashed my hat, and I'll arrest him."

"Well, I would n't allow that, no matter what the child had done," declared Mr. Hartley. "Every child in a public school is entrusted to the principal as if he were that child's parent; and you certainly would not be allowed by a parent to arrest any child without a warrant."

"I'll wait outside the school and catch him as he comes out."

"You may do that on the other side of the street, if Pat Kelly, the policeman on duty here at that hour, will permit it after I inform him of your intention; but not on the sidewalk in front of the school."

"Well, then, what shall I do?"

"Ah!" drawled Mr. Hartley, leaning back and smiling good-naturedly. "Now you want advice. When you came in, you told me what you were going to do. Will you take advice after I give it?"

"I'll hear it fur-rst," retorted the official.

"I advise that you leave the matter in my hands. I will find out who threw the snowball, and will act in the matter as I think best."

Mr. Gilfillan smiled grimly. "How will you find out?"

"I'll ask the culprit to stand up and tell me all about it."

"And a fine chance you have of finding out!"

"That remains to be seen. Now, will you leave it to me?"

Mr. Gilfillan once more eyed his headgear and shook his head resignedly.

"It's about all the chance I have. It looks as if I had bumped up against the system. But I'll act on my own account if I am not satisfied."

"That is your privilege," replied the old school chief.

"Would you mind my presence when you make the trial?"

Mr. Hartley considered for a moment. "All right," he consented. "The guilty boy will get up, with you facing him."

Mr. Gilfillan smiled incredulously. He rose and followed his host, who stopped on the way out to give directions to the clerk.

Johnnie did not hear those instructions. He darted from the doorway like a scared rabbit. The tramp of many feet on the stairways left him little time for action. He glanced around in desperation for some place to hide that awful stove-pipe hat. There was the assembly platform with its long desk and settee, three or four leather-bottomed chairs for the principal and visiting nabobs; and there was the piano and stool. He did not dare hang the hat on the bust of Shakespeare; it would look as though William had been celebrating indecorously. But Kelly had to act quickly. Sixty seconds later he was seated in his classroom, breathing freely. The hat had vanished.

His own class came marching in from the yard, and Johnnie kept perfectly still. He was too serious to engage in his usual chatter. And before he could recover his nerves, he heard the clerk

tell Mr. Parks that there would immediately be an assembly of the boys from all classes above 4 A.

An assembly at one o'clock! Never had there been such a thing before. He had not reckoned on an assembly. He thought Mr. Hartley would take the red-headed man around from room to room. But an assembly! If he could only get that high hat back! Alas, it was too late! Johnnie saw that the Fates were against him.

Being one of the door monitors, Kelly had to go out ahead of his class. On the platform sat Mr. Hartley and the visitor. During recitation hours, twelve-foot doors, the upper half of glass, divided the top floor into six classrooms, with a corridor between. It was Johnnie's duty at the signal to roll two of these doors from the front to the rear of the long corridor.

A snicker escaped him when he saw the common enemy, Old Sally Primton, mince in to the square piano with apparent self-consciousness. Sally Primton was not really old. But with teachers, as with wine, it is not ageing that spoils; it's turning sour; and Sally Primton was sour. Consequently, to the children, who associate "new" with things that are crispy, and shining, and sweet, she was Old Sally. Johnnie was aware that his own exposure was imminent; yet there was grim satisfaction in anticipating

an uncomfortable five minutes for the teacher who had kept him till four o'clock for a week.

"Ugh!" groaned the boy as he remembered the promised one month's detention if he crossed her path again.

With much fussing, like a hen in a dusty road, Miss Primton settled herself on the stool. Straightening her glasses and the sheet of music before her, she awaited the signal. Mr. Parks stood beside her. He lifted his hand; and in response she stabbed the piano. The result was a number of notes in chord; but likewise there was a sound as if some one had dropped a can of tomatoes, and Johnnie's emotions were divided between joy and fear. However, the noise was correctly interpreted; the doors rolled to right and left and rear, leaving an assembly-room criss-crossed with tracks like a freight-yard.

Miss Primton was visibly annoyed at the result of her first attack. Nevertheless, she took a good look along the keyboard and swung into the ancient tune of "Hiawatha." From various points of the compass lines of boys began to parade in.

But there was trouble from the very first note. It sounded as if the enemy had the range and was plumping shells into the mud along the whole line of march.

"Ta-ra, ta-ra! (plump! plump!)" went the

piano; "ta-ra, ta-ra (plunk! blub!), ta-ra (klang!), ta-ra, ra-ra-ra (tzing! dub!)."

Mr. Parks scowled sideways at Miss Primton, then at the piano, not sure which to blame, but having his suspicions, since he and Miss Primton seldom agreed. Mr. Hartley saw that something was wrong. It could not be the piano's fault, he thought, for it had done duty steadily for twenty years without being annoyed to any extent by tuning. He broke into an animated conversation to divert the caller's attention from the horrible slaughter. And the children thought it Sally's natural cussedness.

Old Sally was no coward. Not once did she think of retreat. The enemy might blow up the whole line of march, but she would push on to the bitter end.

"Ta-ra, ra, ra! (bang! plup!)." As each falling bomb tore up a platoon at a time she rushed the next line up to fill the gap: "Ta-ta-ra; ta, ta, ra! (crash! boomp!), ta-ra! (zink!)."

At length she drove the last of the army of boys into the trenches before her. She had pushed them through that roar of deadly bombs by her dogged persistence alone. Mr. Hartley was nervous enough to yell. Mr. Parks was ready to sneer, "Equal pay!" if Miss Primton dared look up. Teachers slipping along the flanks were waiting to reach their bomb-proofs behind the rolling-

doors before letting out snickers. The children, though uneasy, wondering, felt the iron hand of discipline and faltered not. Even Johnnie did not laugh. As for Old Sally herself, she looked as if she had just swallowed a bug in a raspberry.

Mr. Parks raised his hand. Again the heroine dived desperately at the keyboard, and the youngsters dropped into their seats as though a shell had exploded over their heads.

Mr. Hartley arose to address the school.

From a back seat Master Kelly stretched himself out into the center aisle as far as he could discreetly. He had reason to be deeply interested in what Mr. Hartley had to say; but he could not keep his mind on two things at once, and it was most important to observe what Miss Primton was going to do.

At first she did nothing but glare at the piano, which, had it been a small boy, would surely have collapsed. By and by a wrinkle of curiosity appeared on her countenance, and Johnnie's heart beat fast as she leaned down to investigate. She dared not touch the keys while the school head was talking, so she bent her nose close to the keyboard and snooped carefully from one end to the other.

It was at this moment that Johnnie sat up suddenly as he caught in the principal's talk the

words "— knocked off Mr. Gilfillan's high hat. Why should a gentleman in a high hat be the target for cowardly boys? It is not because you have never seen one worn. I wear one — not often, but once in a while. In fact, because I live out of town, I keep a silk hat in my office to use on proper occasions after three o'clock."

Master Kelly wilted in his seat. And to add to his emotions, Miss Primton squinted in under the piano lid.

Mr. Hartley went on talking, but the auburn-haired boy was only dimly conscious of the trend of the speech — he had heard enough — until it came to "Mr. Gilfillan believes that the boy who would be responsible for this is too much of a coward to stand up and acknowledge it." The principal held aloft the maltreated hat.

Jack Van Zarn rose. Then Johnnie came to himself and shot up. Caluchie was a hair behind him, followed instantly by Max Schuler and Isidore Cohen. Within a few seconds forty boys were standing.

Mr. Hartley was dumfounded. He had seen the Congressman's son make the first move, so he turned to him.

"Jack, what does this mean?"

"I — I threw the — the snowball," stammered Jack.

"You did n't say that, Mr. Hartley," blurted

out Kelly. "You said the boy who was responsible. I am."

"So am I," broke in Victor Caluchie.

"We all are," came a voice from across the room.

The principal looked around helplessly.

"Jack, you threw the snowball, you say. I suppose it was a snow-fight, and you did n't aim at this hat."

"Yes, I did aim at that hat," admitted Jack.

"You meant to knock this gentleman's hat from his head with a snowball?" demanded Mr. Hartley. "You, the son of —"

"I thought it was Kelly's hat," was Jack's remarkable statement.

Mr. Hartley eyed him sternly. "You mean to tell me that you mistook this high hat for *Kelly's*?"

It was at this instant that a descending groan of agony issued from the piano as Miss Primton stuck her hand in and pulled from the instrument's interior a distressed black object. It was the remains of another high hat.

She looked at it stupidly, and, turning around, offered it to Mr. Hartley, who still held aloft the silk hat of Alexander Gilfillan. The principal mechanically took the second hat in his disengaged hand and looked from one to the other.

"I kin tell you all about 'em," volunteered Johnnie,

"Go ahead," said Mr. Hartley, who acted as if he had lost his bearings.

"We was practicin' trench-fightin'," explained Kelly. "When the United States sends an army against the Toot'ns, we're goin' to volunteer as a company o' bum-throwers. An' we said the champeen bum-thrower was to be captain, an' I won. I'm captain. And then Van Zarn says, 'The best bum-dodger oughter be lieutenant,' an' I says, 'There ain't no bum-dodger in the comp'ny better 'an the captain,' an' —"

"Come, come, Johnnie," interrupted the principal impatiently, "explain these hats. Don't relate a long-winded story to keep yourself in the limelight. It seems to be your failing."

The admonition had no effect on Kelly. He went on: "You know that there lot is 'way below the street, jist like a real trench, an' the fellers has to git 'way back to see a head over the top o' that board fence; and I says, 'Betcher I'll walk along the sidewalk close to the fence the whole block and never duck down, an' you won't hit me once.' I went to git ready, and I made this." Johnnie exhibited a false mustache which he attached to the cartilage of his nose by means of a piece of bent hairpin.

Mr. Gilfillan leaned forward to get a better view. His face did not show anger. In fact, he seemed to be enjoying himself in a quiet way.

"Then — then —" Johnnie hesitated, "I borried a high hat and walked up the street right past the gang, an' they did n't know me, an' I won, an' laughed at 'em from up the street; an' jist then some one yelled, 'Cheese it, the bell!' an' they all beat it for the yard — all except Jack, an' he laid for me. An' when he seen a high hat over the fence with — with hair — with hair like mine under it, an' a musstash, he let one whiz. An' it was n't me a-tall — it was that man up there."

The allusion to the similarity of their coloring, instead of irritating, seemed to please Gilfillan. His mouth twitched and he glanced at the principal.

"Is this the hat?" Mr. Hartley shook the one Miss Primton had captured.

"Yes, sir, and I made this musstash out o' some hair from a chair-cushion in — in your office," Johnnie went on.

"Where did you get this hat?"

"I shoved it into the pianner," evaded Johnnie. "When I borried it I did n't think anythin' would happen to it. I was awful careful; but when I was runnin' for school with the hat in me hand — I was n't far behind Mr. Gilfillan — I slipped and fell on it an' — an' squashed it. I thought it was an old one, honest Injun. It had been hangin' there ever since I come to this school."

"Whose was it?" asked Mr. Hartley.

"I'll — I'll pay for it."

"Whose was it?"

"Y-y-yours," said Johnnie.

Mr. Hartley's face was a study.

"I'll call it quits, if *you* will," chuckled the visitor.

Hartley and Gilfillan grinned at the two hats and at each other like schoolboys.

Johnnie Kelly looked about. The cynosure of all his schoolmates' eyes, he could almost feel the thrill of their admiration. He had reached the height of his ambition. He was their hero. Suddenly he caught the vengeful eye of Sally Prinston — and collapsed hopelessly into his seat.

"Gee!" sighed the captain of the bum-throwers; "thoity days more in the cooler! Darn the organ-grinder!"

CHAPTER XII

THE SIREN IN THE LUNCH-ROOM

IT was noon hour of a rainy school-day. In the lunch-room of Number 199 there was the usual subdued hum and chatter. Helen Bouck was the teacher in charge. Johnnie found a corner seat in the rear of the room, pulled two packages from his coat-pockets and tackled a thick corned-beef sandwich.

A girl took the seat directly in front of him. He knew of only one girl among the twelve hundred-odd in the school who had golden-sunset hair like that. It tumbled down Geo'gia's back in careless curls, some invading his desk. There was a fascination to that hair. Hardly realizing what he was doing, he put down his sandwich and twisted a curl around his finger. The girl turned quickly.

"Oh, it's you, Johnnie!" said she with a pleasant smile, as if — artful little woman! — she was for the first time aware of his proximity.

"'Scuse me," mumbled Johnnie.

"That's all right," she assured him; and as she turned half about with her feet in the aisle, the boy should have understood her intention.

He, however, saying nothing, took a prodigious bite into a sandwich and to avoid meeting Geo'gia's eyes fastened his own upon Miss Bouck at the desk in front.

Geo'gia followed his gaze.

"Is n't she a dear?" bubbled the girl.

"Umph!" answered Johnnie non-committally. In truth, he did not realize that he had been staring at the new 1 A teacher.

"And to think her mother's brother is that solemn old Mr. Gilfillan!" Geo'gia rattled on. "And she lives with him here in New York because her father and mother live somewhere up State. Daddy says Mr. Gilfillan always seems to be afraid he may forget and show himself just an ordinary mortal. He *did* smile the other day when he saw Mr. Hartley's smashed hat, did n't he?"

"Yare," answered Johnnie, his face as expressionless as that of a wooden Indian.

With a tiny silver-handled knife Geo'gia cut a banana in half, placed one piece on Johnnie's desk and peeled back the other half for a dainty bite. Johnnie ignored the proffered bribe.

There was silence while she finished the morsel. Geo'gia's voice grew confidentially low. "But he stiffened right up again when he looked at Mr. Parks. Ah held the door open at the head of the visitors' stairs when he went out and Ah heard

him growl, 'The big brute!' Of course he meant Mr. Parks. It really was funny the way Mr. Parks handled him in the yard. Ah reckon Mr. Gilfillan will never get over it."

Johnnie vouchsafed no comment.

"Ah wish he did like Mr. Parks, don't you?"

"Yare," was Johnnie's contribution, since he could not ignore the lady's persistence.

"Mr. Parks can't keep away from her, can he? They would make a lovely match! Would n't they?"

Johnnie was silent.

"Don't you think so, Johnnie?"

"Yare." Johnnie found it necessary to examine the crust of his bread. Eating lunch was becoming serious business.

Geo'gia nibbled at a piece of cake for a very short moment. "But if Mr. Gilfillan is so angry at Mr. Parks, maybe they won't have a chance to get really nicely acquainted." — A pause — "Maybe Mr. Parks will go to the war — and get killed — and she'll just pine away —"

Geo'gia's voice thinned out as the sad thought came to her. Her tongue was still for fully a minute. Then she looked up furtively at Johnnie. But as he chewed on assiduously, she turned slowly back toward her own desk, her cheeks more than usually pink, her brows drawn into a wrinkle of disappointment.

After a draft from her vacuum bottle, however, she returned to the siege. "Would n't you like a piece of my chocolate cake?"

"Ain't hungry," replied Johnnie, taking a Brobdingnagian bite into his fourth full-sliced sandwich. He had a healthy boy's craving for chocolate cake; but he would not have accepted that cake under any circumstances, for it would have been a reflection upon his own lunch.

"Won't you help me finish this cocoa?" The cup came up over the edge of Johnnie's desk.

"Ain't thirsty."

Her hand shook as she put the cup back on her own desk.

"They might elope, though! Would n't that be thrilling?"

"Yare."

"Ah don't see why Mr. Gilfillan should be — so — so — starchy, do you? He is n't popular with the parents, you know. They elected him President of the Parents' Association because they thought he had barrels of money; and now they see he does n't give any more to the Association than he has to. Mr. Van Zarn and Daddy say that, now the whole school is going to carry out Mr. Hartley's plan and organize to do War Work, they must get a real, live man for president. You know there's to be an election soon, and neither Mr. Van Zarn nor Daddy wants the

position, so they are going to put up Mr. Schuler — Max's father. You know Mr. Schuler?"

"Yare."

"Is n't he funny?"

"Sure."

"You know, Mr. Schuler was born in Germany, but since war was declared he has been fearfully patriotic. He knows what it is to live under German rule. He came to the United States to get away from it, and he has no use for the Germany of to-day. I don't like him because he has a saloon in his hotel. Have you seen the windows of his café?"

"Sure."

"Are n't they a scream?"

"Yare."

"All flags and banners and pictures of the President and generals and admirals. And on his coat he wears American flags and buttons. Daddy says Mr. Schuler wants to be sure no one mistakes him for the Kaiser's cousin. — But he's a really honest-and-truly American. Don't you think so?"

"Sure."

The girl turned her troubled eyes upon him so deliberately that he had to look at her.

"Why are you so grumpy?" she demanded.

"Ain't." His own eyes once more found safety in contemplating Miss Bouck.

"Yes, you are."

He condescended no answer, but nibbled at the small remaining piece of sandwich.

"It was n't nice the least bit for me to poke fun at you the other day." Her head was down, but her eyes peeked sideways at him. Still he chewed industriously on a tiny bite.

"Ah'm sorry."

Johnnie crumpled his lunch papers together and wiped the crumbs off his desk with the wad.

"Are you mad at me?" asked Geo'gia, very low.

"Y — y — No."

"Why don't you talk?"

Johnnie got to his feet with surprising alacrity and glared at Miss Geo'gia Carter.

"Say," he growled, "what cher teasin' me fer? Tryin' to git me to break me word so you kin snitch? I promised Mr. Parks I would n't annoy you no more and I would n't kiss you again, and I won't."

"Oh!" exclaimed Geo'gia, leaping to her feet in turn, her cheeks flaming, her eyes snapping, her fists clenched. She stamped her foot. "You — you! Oh, I don't know what you are — you, *you*, you!"

She snatched up her lunch-kit and flew out of the room before the startled Miss Bouck could more than rise from her chair.

CHAPTER XIII

NOTHING TO LAUGH AT

JOHNNIE KELLY's wardrobe boasted three pairs of trousers. There was a Sunday pair, a pair for school, and a pair of just ordinary pants to which he was condemned on holidays, when boys are most dangerous to their apparel. It was Saturday morning, not a school-day, yet Johnnie was up at six o'clock arrayed in his Sunday "longies," for Mr. Parks had planned a day of discovery, exploration, and adventure in the fastnesses of Interstate Park on the west shore of the Hudson opposite the upper end of Manhattan Island.

Waiting in his bedroom until his mother was busy near the wash-tubs, the boy slid quietly into the kitchen and got his legs safely hidden under the breakfast table before she caught sight of him.

Mrs. Kelly eyed him comically.

"Phat the divil ails you, you're so quiet?" she asked. "You must have a timp'rature. Where do you feel sick, darlint?"

"Quit your kiddin'," said Johnnie with a sheepish grin, and he applied himself to his breakfast.

He got away with an orange, a bowl of oat-

meal, four rolls, and two cups of coffee, and thanked his stars that his mother had not read the coffee chapter in his hygiene book. Lured by the mysterious dark batter that his mother was slapping in the yellow bowl, Master Johnnie forgot about his nether garments.

"What cher makin'?" he inquired, approaching the wash-tubs, the scene of activity.

Mrs. Kelly stopped short, her eyes focused on the long trousers. Slowly her floury forefinger rose and aimed at them accusingly.

"Take 'em off, ta-ake 'em off!" she ordered gravely.

"Aw, please, mother! All the fellers'll look decent 'cept me."

"Ta-ake 'em off. Put on your work pants. Who iver heard of Columbus or George Wash-in'ton explorin' in their best Sunda' breeches?"

"Ah-h, mother! I'll look like a wop. Then can't I wear my school pants? The others are all patches."

"That's what comes o' playin' marbles, young man. Wear your old ones, I say, like a sinsible b'y. There ain't goin' to be no girls along, hey?"

"No, but, ah, gee! I'll feel as poor as — as — everythin' and I don't want to go, then."

"Now, do as I say. Don't make me feel bad. That's a darlint."

As Mrs. Kelly was about to put her arms

around him affectionately, her son hastily retreated to his room. When he came out again, he wore the patched knee-breeches.

"Crack a smile," chuckled his mother; "this ain't the day you're to be hanged."

"Ah, don't laugh at me. There ain't anythin' to laugh at."

He edged nearer the mysterious bowl, and as his mother reached into the closet for the vanilla bottle, he tried to dip in his finger.

"Out of that, you brat!" cried Mrs. Kelly, and the agate spoon came down sharply on his knuckles, spattering his hand with the dark batter.

"Choc-er-late cake! Choc-er-late cake!" he cried gleefully, licking his hand. "Hooray! Kin I lick the bowl, mother?"

"I don't waste nothin' in war times," declared Mrs. Kelly dumping the batter into a cake tin and scraping the bowl with tantalizing thoroughness; "there ain't goin' to be no lickin' except what I'll give you if you don't keep your fingers out o' my cookin'. Run along wid ye, or some one else'll beat ye discoverin' Jersey."

"Ah! don't scrape it all out — leave some for me."

"There's your lunch on the tubs. Now be off, before I make you stay home."

"I don't want no lunch. I ain't hungry. All I want is a piece of choc-er-late cake. Can't I?"

"It won't be done for an hour. Now, stop teasin'. Here's your lunch."

"I ain't hungry, I tell you. Can I have a piece when I come home?"

"I don't want to cut it till your father's Sunda' dinner. I'll have a good hot dinner for ye the night when you come home."

"I won't be hungry. Just have a piece of choc-er-late cake ready."

"Be off with you!"

As Mrs. Kelly stooped down to put the cake in the oven, Johnnie kissed her on the ear, snatched the clothes-line from behind the kitchen door without being caught, and bolted.

He got off the car at Dyckman Street, turned his back on the nest of apartments already crowding nature off the end of Manhattan Island, and pursued his solitary way westward toward the ferry which would take him to Interstate Park across the Hudson. He sniffed ecstatically the fragrance of green grass and shrubs and budding trees. He was living in a boy's enchanted land of imagination. Out from under his coat he drew the Kelly clothes-line. It was all there. He dared not cut it, for on Monday it must dry the Kelly wash. He fashioned it into a lasso, for the influence of Buffalo Bill still held him.

"There, you villain!" he growled as upon the third attempt he settled the loop over a fire-

hydrant, "say your prayers. You've murdered your last innocent settler."

The hydrant made no answer.

"Bang!" said Johnnie. He staggered back, clasping his right arm with his left hand.

"Shot!" he snarled. "Thought you'd drop me in me tracks, did you? Take that!"

Up to the hydrant he stepped, pointed his forefinger at it, thumb up.

"Bang! bang! bang!" Down came his thumb at each bang in imitation of the hammer of a revolver.

He released the lasso and kicked the hydrant.

"T'row his corpse over the cliff," he ordered some phantom confederate and continued his journey, winding his lasso on his arm.

Near the ferry, he was met by Max Schuler.

"Hey! there's a mob of girls here, and you're the only big feller."

Johnnie came down from the clouds with a thud.

"What?" he choked out indignantly, contemplating with chagrin the patches on his knees. Welcome would be the day when these breeches-in-the-doubtful-stage would refuse to do their duty, the other two would each step down a peg, and he could blossom forth daily in his first longies. "I t'ought Mr. Parks said dis was to be a stag?"

"He did. But most of the fellers could n't come. Some's starting their war gardens like my fader told them, so after you got sent out of the classroom yesterday —"

"And what for? Jist sayin' I did n't want to spend a good Sa'day takin' care of a lot of girls!"

"Well, after you went out, Geo'gia got to coaxin' him, and he gave in."

"She's always workin' him," growled Johnnie. "Why does everybody let that yellow-haired kid soft-soap 'em into doin' anythin' she wants? I would n't do a t'ing for her, I bet. Is Mr. Parks here yet?"

"Yes, and Miss Bouck, too."

"Oh, pfui!" groaned Johnnie, "who let *her* out?"

"Mr. Parks says he had to ask her to come along to chaperon the girls."

Johnnie seated himself on the curbstone, chin in hand, the picture of hopeless dejection.

"I'm a stupid raspberry, that's what I am," he admitted; "when he got to tootin' so hard about what a glorious time we could have on this party I oughter 'ave smelt smoke."

"Come on; we can have a bully time," coaxed Max.

But Johnnie paid no attention. "If he did n't git up this picnic jist fer her, then I'm sure a

gink. Well, I ain't goin' along. Girls ain't no use out on a trip like this; an' I bet them two teachers 'll have all they kin do to chaperone each other. Jimmin-eddies! A whole Sa'day spoiled!"

When Johnnie first came to school 199, he had been totally indifferent to personal appearance. Now, however, he kept close watch on his classmates and saw to it that none was more neatly dressed than he. Hard enough would it have been this Saturday to present himself before the boys in those work-day trousers — but let the girls see them? Never! He was not afraid of girls. He could tolerate them. At picnics girls usually carried loads and loads of dandy grub, and a fellow had a good chance of obtaining his share, if he was diplomatic. But how could a fellow be diplomatic in a pair of patched pants? His day was spoiled.

"Home for mine," he told Max; and in spite of his classmate's coaxing, he actually did start back toward the car-line.

But after Max had shuffled off, Johnnie managed to creep back to a point where, unseen himself, he could take observations. Mr. Parks was carrying Miss Bouck's lunch. Johnnie was disgusted. Blackly he glared at sunny-haired Geo'gia, bubbling with animation in the midst of the group of girls and small boys gathered near the ferry-house. Each little miss in holiday

attire of white middy and blue skirt was carrying a shoe-box under her arm, and alluring were the visions of the contents. Each boy's bulging pockets told where he carried his lunch.

His own four sandwiches had been consumed on the way uptown, not because he was hungry, but because he thought the others would probably have a better lunch than he, and he would be ashamed of it. And then, again, he had told his mother he didn't want any. Now came doubts as to the wisdom of his act. How much worse it would appear not to have any lunch at all. If he went home to eat, his mother would tease him unmercifully.

He took his money from his trousers' pocket and counted it: Forty cents. Why not stay on this side of the river, and buy something to eat?

Across the Hudson the Palisades, like a broad, green ribbon, stretched north and south as far as the eye could see. Oh, it was an enchanted land that loomed up there — Interstate Park, a land of frowning precipices and eerie caverns, a land one could imagine abounding with deadly Indians and wild animals, a wonderful country — the Land of Ought-to-be!

Five cents across, five cents back, five cents car-fare home, and twenty-five for ice-cream cones and soda at the stand near the ferry across there at the foot of the Palisades — ten cents

before, and fifteen after, the plunge into the wilderness.

The decision was made: better cones and soda and the wild woods than a full stomach and city pavements. And since patched knickerbockers forbade social intercourse, so be it: there would be a lone cowboy in the Jersey wilds, let Mr. Parks and Helen Bouck and Geo'gia Carter and 7 B roam where they willed.

Back into his trousers' pocket went the money.

Two or three more joined the class, and Mr. Parks led them with Miss Bouck aboard the ferry-boat. Johnnie remained out of sight and invented conversations between himself and Mr. Parks, in which the teacher got a good overhauling.

"Goin' to chaperoon the girls, is she? Well, she can't even git on a ferry-boat without help, so it looks." . . . "Why did n't you say you was goin' to take her out to-day and invite us to come wid yer?" . . . "You want her along — all right, *all* right. I know: you dassent call on her at home because old Billkillem is sour on you; but why the rest o' the females? Is she afraid to come alone?" . . . "Yes, I got yer, now; Geo'gia and the rest is only just a juicy excuse. You're slick, Parks, old boy, you're slick."

By the time Johnnie got through, the imaginary Mr. Parks was completely squelched.

CHAPTER XIV

ENTER SLUGGER SAM

ABOARD the next boat went the boy, his lasso concealed under his coat, being attached to a hook rigged to the armhole. He gravitated at once to the engine-room. He was leaning over the half-door engrossed in the contemplation of the moving machinery when some one roughly pushed him aside and settled into his place. Johnnie was not accustomed to such treatment. Resentfully he turned. The intruder was a boy of Johnnie's height, but heavier. In his hard features one could read that he was a couple of years older than Kelly. Over one eye he wore his cap. The ostentatious way in which he kept his hands in his pockets to hold his coat back, caught Johnnie's eye; and a glance at the sharp crease in the long trousers confirmed the red-headed boy's suspicions.

Johnnie wet his finger and rubbed it along the crease of the new pantaloons.

"How dey do affect the noodle the first time a feller puts 'em on, hey?" he remarked coolly.

The other thrust his nose close to Johnnie's and glared his fiercest.

"Tryin' to guy me?" he snarled. "Be careful,

little one. I'm Slugger Sam, champeen of Sixty-T'ird Street. I'm liable to smash all your freckles into one big smudge."

Johnnie drew away with a bored expression.

"Please to meet your acquaintance, Sam," he returned carelessly. "I'm Cowboy Kelly, champeen of der Bronx. Hope we meet again."

And Johnnie Kelly diplomatically withdrew, followed by Slugger Sam's derisive chuckle of victory.

Before the boat reached the Jersey shore, Johnnie was angry with himself, through and through. He should have stuck right by the engine-room door and had it out with that tough. He should have wiped the deck with the arrogant Sam. He would — next time.

The class were nowhere in sight when Johnnie got off the boat; for which he was thankful. Sam was too preoccupied smirking at a group of girls to notice Johnnie's scowl, so the cowboy decided to postpone Sam's undoing for a time. Away from the crowd he hurried and made for the rough path leading north near the shore. The call of the woods made him forget all about soda and ice-cream.

At first he chafed under the restraints imposed by the presence of others. Hardly could he lasso a single Indian or desperate character — impersonated by a rock or stump or bush — with-

out being obliged to curtail some of the dramatics and mumble the conversation between himself and the foeman, owing to the proximity of chattering children or some couple sauntering blissfully along hand in hand.

The upper reaches of the slope near the foot of the precipice afforded more opportunities for heroics; but even then one could not shout out the altercations in true Buffalo Bill style. Later, farther away from the ferry, his fancy soared to wilder flights, and his cup of joy was full.

Around eleven-thirty o'clock, however, came a suspicious emptiness where lunch ought to fit. Ice-cream and soda were far behind him. There was no sign of Mr. Parks, Miss Bouck, and class 7 B, though they must certainly be somewhere ahead; and now came visions of shoe-boxes. There must be heaps to eat in that crowd. Strong was the temptation to seek them. His eyes dropped to contemplate his knee-patches, and the light died out.

Listlessly he threw himself into the high grass, pulled a seed stem, and put into his mouth the tender base end. He liked it, and repeated again and again. A bluebird settled on a bough across the path. A saucy robin redbreast came within twenty feet and called his mate. Johnnie lay perfectly still and watched. In fancy he found himself supplied with wings. A very small, power-

ful motor of a kind the world had never seen before was on his back. He had but to press a button on his coat and the noiseless machinery would start his arm-wings going and up he would scoot, right through the trees toward that blue patch of sky, and he could look down and pick out the party with the best lunch, and glide down right in amongst them, and get invited to sit down and eat — of course, he'd not be wearing patched knickers. — No, that was not just the way it was. The wings were not attached to his arms. They were separate, because he could n't knock the stuffing out of that Sam if the wings were tied to his arms. Oh, yes! His arms had levers along them, attached to that machine on his back; and if he pressed one certain coat-button with a finger of his left hand, his trusty right would shoot out like a piston-rod, Sam would turn three back somersaults, and land in a heap.

Johnnie leaped to his feet. The robin and the bluebird flew away. Johnnie pressed a button on his coat and planted a straight-arm jolt with keen relish upon the imaginary Sam's jaw.

A stone struck him between the shoulders.

"Hello!" greeted a voice behind him; and there in the flesh stood the belligerent Sam. "What cher doin'? Workin' up a appetite?"

Johnnie measured him up and down. He had

met a good many Sams in the city parks; for the Sams confine their activities to places where there is the least danger of interference from meddlesome grown-ups. This Sam showed symptoms of being a novice. There was a lack of assurance that comes with many victories. The Slugger's advances toward the girls down by the ferry had betrayed crudeness and uncertainty. Undoubtedly Sam's first pair of long trousers was affecting him badly.

"Naw!" retorted the auburn Kelly after his lengthy survey. "I'm punchin' a hole in the wind to make room for your hot air. What cher t'row-in' stones at me for?"

"The kid's clever!" sneered Sam. "I guess he's spoilin' for a busted bean."

"You ain't," said Johnnie; "yours is cracked a'ready."

Sam doubled up his fists and came on. Johnnie got out of his way and put his fingers up to his nose and laughed.

When Johnnie stopped running two minutes later, Sam was not in sight. Johnnie sat down in the grass to get his breath. The more he thought over his flight, the hotter he got. This was the second time he had avoided conclusions with Slugger Sam. Fear had not caused him to flee; he simply wanted to get his opponent's goat. But it did not look that way. Through his mind ran

versions of the affair as it should have been. In each of these, Johnnie was the conqueror. Sam was battered to a finish in the prize ring, thrown over a cliff, lynched, or blown up by Johnnie's submarine.

The reverie put Cowboy Kelly in a heroic state of mind. He got to his feet and with a determined air stamped up the path.

Not half a mile farther on, Johnnie came upon Slugger Sam, a lunch-box under his arm; and facing him, red-faced and furious, was Geo'gia Carter — a bunch of wild violets in her hand attesting the cause of her separation from the rest of the party.

"I'll carry it for you," Sam was saying; "don't git mad. I jist want to walk along with you. Ain't I good enough?"

"Ah can carry it myself," asserted the spirited Southerner indignantly. "Ah prefer to walk alone."

"Aw, be a nice girlye," simpered Sam, taking her by the arm and leering into her face.

"Please let me go," begged Geo'gia; "please, ah, please!"

A peculiar, sickening feeling came to the pit of Johnnie's stomach. Though too young to know evil fully at first hand, the boy was not ignorant of the workings of the rowdy's mind. Johnnie had always looked upon girls with scorn and

disdain. Now, for the first time in his life, there flashed into this clean-minded, clean-hearted young soul the realization that a girl was entitled to his respect and his protection. That the girl in this case happened to be Geo'gia Carter served merely to bring the truth nearer home. There was no sentiment in his wrath. It was the awakening of true manhood.

Scarcely had Geo'gia time for one frightened cry before it was echoed by Johnnie's furious bellow of rage as he came charging upon the scene.

Sam dropped the girl's arm and the lunch-box, and faced Johnnie.

"Don't run away, girlie," said the tough. "Jest watch me knock Cowboy Kelly's block off. Then I'll treat you to a ice-cream soda." He jingled some coins in his trousers' pocket.

Johnnie was beyond words. He lunged at Sam so savagely that his opponent retreated. But the heavy coil of rope under his arm was not conducive to quick action. And Sam was no novice. Blow after blow he parried, once in a while landing a smart rap that straightened up the lanky cowboy; but mainly he devoted his ring-craft to leading Johnnie on. When he had the avenger of distressed maidens where he planned, the wily Sam shot out his left arm, caught Johnnie squarely in the eye and sent him

heels over head over a fallen log and down a short embankment.

Johnnie untangled himself from the lasso, which added its treacherous coils to his difficulty, and scrambled to his feet. Geo'gia had fled with her lunch-box. Slugger Sam, hands in pockets, was sauntering up the river-path, whistling nonchalantly.

Johnnie felt of his damaged eye. He was strangely calm and thoughtful. It was no longer a boy's fight, but a real, grown-up struggle. He considered hurrying on to get in communication with Mr. Parks. Perhaps Geo'gia would do that very thing. But he had been sent from the classroom for calling attention to the weakness of girls! Now, a girl must not only appeal to the teacher for her own protection, but, doubtless, would beg assistance for the boastful Johnnie himself. It must not be! Johnnie vowed to seek Slugger Sam and have it out if he had to go home in an ambulance.

A breeze from the south revealed another result of the battle: a Scotch pocket as big as a Charmer Penmanship book had been torn in the seat of his holiday trousers.

"Mother was right," he declared ruefully; then he grinned as a thought came to him: "Now I guess I gotter have longies!"

He made deliberate preparations for his cam-

paign against the enemy. On his arm he wound his lasso and hung it on the hook. At one of the hydrants scattered conveniently throughout the park his black eye got a cooling bath. Next came a bracing drink, and there started a hunt for the savage; but this time there was an earnest reality to it that forbade the boyish byplay of the morning.

He rounded a turn. There down on the beach were his classmates. Keeping out of sight, he came to the brink of the steep bank just above them and threw himself down to peer over the ledge.

The small boys were playing ball with an orange; the girls were setting out the lunch. Sandwiches, pickles, apples, oranges, bananas, cake, bottles, and jars with mysterious contents — my! How his mouth watered! Mr. Parks and Miss Bouck were not present. From remarks Johnnie learned that, before Geo'gia had caught up to the party after her encounter with Sam, the teachers had gone toward Alpine, two miles or so farther on, ostensibly to get soft drinks for the party. In response to Geo'gia's appeal, two of the boys had raced away up the road to relate the adventure to the teacher. Opinions differed as to what Mr. Parks would do.

“Johnnie don't need help,” laughed Max. “He's too tough.”

"He's a gentleman," declared Geo'gia hotly.

"Y-yes," admitted Max. "I mean he's used to fighting. The other fellow won't be able to hurt him much; and when it comes to snappy rough talk, he's all right there."

Johnnie's cheeks burned. So his language placed him on a level with Slugger Sam!

But there came Geo'gia's loyal retort as balm on a wound: "Ah don't care how he talks; it's how he acts that counts. — Ah wish Mr. Parks and Miss Bouck would hurry back. Maybe Johnnie did really get hurt."

Hurt! Did she think he was a baby? What was hurting him more than anything else was his empty stomach; and the chance of healing that hurt seemed hopeless; for, were he clothed in a cloth of gold instead of seatless trousers, he was too ashamed to present himself before his classmates after the humiliating outcome of his encounter with Slugger Sam.

CHAPTER XV

LONGIES

As he lay there, wistfully taking in the inviting display of eatables down there on the beach below him, a stone smashed a bottle of pickles in Geo'gia's hand. She screamed and ran. Another stone struck amid the group of boys, and there were cries of protest. Johnnie quickly located the source. Sam was in a clump of bushes near by. Sam was enjoying himself at the discomfiture of the lunch-party. Johnnie loosened the lasso from its hook and crept toward the intruder.

So absorbed in his task was the loafer that Johnnie got close behind him without being discovered. With a well-calculated throw, the stalker settled the coils over Sam's head just as that worthy dropped his hands to his side. The loop jerked tight. Like a cat the Irish lad was upon his captive, throwing one half-hitch after another.

There followed an exciting two minutes. Neither boy made a sound loud enough to attract the attention of the chattering class; for Johnnie intended to conquer alone or not at all, and Sam was wise enough to see that a racket would only bring aid to the enemy.

Sam kicked and bit and scratched around; but, try as he might, he could not get his arms free.

Sam's language was not pleasing to Johnnie's ears.

"Cut out the rough stuff," the captor growled, snatching up a tuft of grass — roots, earth, and all, "or I'll shove dis down your t'roat."

There was such determination in his voice that Sam wisely obeyed.

Johnnie took an observation of his classmates. They had settled down once more, unaware of the reason for their deliverance. The outcast grinned at them superiorly.

"Oh, I don't know!" he observed in his enigmatical slang, and proceeded to march his prisoner back along the road away from the class, around a point, and down upon the beach.

"When I git loose — " Sam gathered courage enough to hint.

"Silence, prisoner!" commanded the cowboy. "Sit down!"

Sam did not obey fast enough, so he was tripped up.

"You want to mind quick if you know what's good for you," he was told.

He was rolled over on his face, examined from head to feet, and rolled back again.

"What's dat for?" he demanded.

"Nothin'," replied Johnnie. "I got fooled. I t'ought I'd find it stamped on the bottom."

"Find what?"

"'Made in Germany.'"

Sam's retort was more expressive than elegant, and he got a mouthful of dirt for his pains.

The rope around the body of the prisoner was readjusted so that his left arm was freed.

"I see by the one wallop you give me that you're a left-hander," explained Johnnie. "Now, you like to t'row stones so much, especially at girls and kids, that I'm goin' to let you have one grand picnic. I ain't a-tall selfish. You're goin' to t'row five hundred stones, each as big as a egg, and each t'row must be as far as that log over there. Come on, stand up and begin. If you don't obey the rules, the t'row don't count."

Sluggish Sam made up his mind that he preferred to thrash his jailer single-handed. He made the attempt. The set-to was short and decisive.

"I don't want to be too rough with you," declared Johnnie with provoking calmness as he lifted Sam to a sitting posture; "because I hate to git your new pants mussed up, but I ain't foolin'."

"You don't fight square," whimpered Sam, who was rapidly losing his bravado; "you're a coward."

"This ain't a fight," explained his conqueror;

“this is animal trainin’. You got to use jest enough t’rashin’ to make ’em know who’s boss, then try kindness. Now, go ahead and t’row like a nice chim-pansy.”

It was a long task. Sam was not a willing performer. Much persuasion and urging was required as the count went on and his arm grew weary. Somewhere in the three hundreds the prisoner began to plead. He could scarcely lift his arm. At four hundred and ten he dropped in a heap.

“Please le’ me go — please — ah — please!”

Johnnie put his forefinger to his forehead to indicate thought.

“Where have I heard them words before — ‘Please, ah, please’? — Seems to me a girl said them when you grabbed her and stuck your ugly mug in her face. My, oh, my!” Johnnie sighed, “how time changes things! Now, you’re a-sayin’ it.” He put his face close to Sam’s and spoke fiercely, for he felt every word he uttered: “I’ve seen lots like you. You’re dirty, right through. Cross me heart, I’m sorry fer you. You kin never git over it — I mean the dirt inside; but you’ve got one good lesson to-day that will make you more careful next time.”

Johnnie twisted himself into a knot to study the damage to his trousers.

“Say, Sam,” he asked, “did you ever dream

you lost your pants out somewheres where you should n't lose 'em?"

"Yeh," answered Sam. "You sure ain't got much pants on now."

He found a grain of comfort in that fact, at least for a few seconds.

"Yeh," drawled Johnnie, "it's a fierce dream. Well, your dream is comin' true. I'm goin' to wear your pants to the picnic."

Then Johnnie Kelly freed his prisoner.

"Come on, now," said he, "keep me from doin' it, if you can."

All that had gone before was as nothing to the strenuosity of the next few minutes. There was a ferocity to the combat that made it close to dangerous. The Irish boy's blood was up; and the rowdy discovered that he had made a mistake when he chose for an enemy Cowboy Kelly. The five hundred stones were, no doubt, the cause of the overwhelming victory. When the avenger got through, Sam had no resisting power left. Johnnie was in possession of the long trousers. He put them on.

"How do I look in longies, Sam?" he laughed. "Some class, hey? A bit loose, though."

A blubbered jumble of sounds was the answer.

"Don't git cross," cautioned the victor sweetly. "I ain't stealin' your clothes. I'm goin' to let you wear my pants home. Jest like I thought, you

ain't been wearin' longies long, because you still wear stockin's instead o' socks, so you won't look so worse if you don't turn around. Now" — Johnnie found a piece of paper and a pencil in his coat-pocket and wrote while he talked — "here's my address. You kin come git your pants any time after I git home. Don't bother bringin' mine — it's time I got longies, anyhow."

Sam sat up and tried to think up a retort. The removal of his trousers had taken from him the last vestige of bravado. Like Samson shorn of his locks, the Slugger was helpless. Johnnie helped him on with the dilapidated knickerbockers, then tied the prisoner's hands behind his back with scarcely a struggle.

"Forward march!" was the order.

It was a spiritless prisoner that Johnnie paraded into the presence of his classmates.

"All right, he's safe!" Johnnie sang out, seeing that the teachers were still away. "Don't git scared. I got 'im tamed."

"Let him go, Johnnie," begged Geo'gia. "We're better off with him nowhere around."

"Sure," said Johnnie. "I jest wanted youse all to see him tamed. I'm goin' to turn you loose, Sam. You kin fight again, if you want to; but if you're wise, you'll back out o' here most polite jest like goin' away from a king, jest lookin' around enough to see where you're goin'. And

when you're out o' sight, you can turn around and run home and tell mamma all about it."

As Johnnie unloosened the rope, his classmates stepped back expectantly, doubtless believing that no human being with a face like Sam's could stand such treatment. And when the mighty Sam backed away and vanished among the trees, Johnnie became the center of an excited, babbling group of grateful, hero-worshipping boys and girls.

Mr. Parks and Miss Bouck chose this moment to reappear, the man carrying a basket filled with sarsaparilla, ginger-ale, and lemon soda. Geo'gia was standing beside Johnnie. She had said little except to thank the hero. She was flushed and subdued; but at sight of the returning elders her eyes brightened and she plucked Johnnie's sleeve.

"Are n't they lovely?" she whispered enthusiastically.

Johnnie scrutinized the pair critically.

"They went after soft stuff, did n't they?" he observed disgustedly; "and, oy! they've got it in their eyes!"

The small boys, with lively gusto, rehearsed for the teachers' benefit as much of Johnnie's affair as they knew. Dan Parks patted the hero on the back, Helen Bouck put her arms on the boy's shoulder and said nice things; but neither

of them brought a thrill to the boy with the fiery hair. He loved Dan Parks, and he worshiped Helen Bouck; but he had just seen unmistakable signs that each was weaning away the other from that close intimacy with Johnnie and his young friends which is only possible for the heart-free.

He voiced his fears a little later to Geo'gia.

"See 'em tossin' goo-goo eyes!" he grumbled. "We're orphans now."

"Why should n't they?" retorted the Southern miss. "Ah think it's perfectly lovely."

"If old Gillvillain got wise it 'ud be dis way out for Dan'l."

"You're not nice," declared Geo'gia reprovingly, and Johnnie wisely dropped the subject.

When Mr. Parks called all hands to lunch, Johnnie found a space in the circle beside Geo'gia, drew up the trousers to save the crease, and settled down. He had not chosen that seat because of any especial liking for Geo'gia, but his eagle eye had discovered that she carried the largest lunch-box.

"Try some of this chicken?" was her greeting, and he tried it.

Class 7 B were generous to their hero. Not only from Geo'gia's kit, but from every package in the class came contributions. His newly acquired longies were rather large around the waist-band;

yet bravely he tried to fill them out. Afterwards he could recall hard-boiled eggs, sour pickles, ham-, lettuce-, sardine-, and chicken-sandwiches, olives and jam, dill-pickles, cocoanut pie, angel cake, radishes, lady-fingers, bananas, sarsaparilla, ginger-ale, and a thermos bottle of cocoa. But how much of these he consumed, the boy could not remember.

It was around six o'clock when the returning picnic came to the ferry. Strolling behind the main crowd were Dan and Helen, arm in arm, while still farther back sauntered Johnnie Kelly and Geo'gia Carter, he, with the bottom of his trousers carefully turned up, swinging her hat by its strings. Such is the subtle influence of example and of longies.

The last pair reached the ice-cream and soda stand. In an inconspicuous corner outside sat Sam, burying his battered features in a plate of ice-cream. He did not see the couple.

"Sam promised you a treat, did n't he?" asked Johnnie, trying to speak with offhand carelessness. "Suppose you have one on me?" and he led her inside to a table.

Chocolate and strawberry ice-cream! The pair heard the toot of the ferry-boat and witnessed the departure of teachers and comrades without a qualm. It was the end of a perfect day.

Then Johnnie put his hand into his trousers' pocket for his money — and it came out with just five pennies.

The blood rushed to the roots of his hair. Next he went cold. The creeps went up and down his spine. Geo'gia looked into his outstretched palm, and Johnnie could have sunk through the floor.

He looked about for some means of escape, and he felt Geo'gia's hand slide on top of his.

"You sit heah, tight," she whispered, "and eat very slow, and wait for me."

And she was gone.

Followed two minutes of suspense. He did n't know but what she intended him to sit there until she had gone home for money, and he wondered which way he would land when the proprietor kicked him out.

He breathed more freely when Geo'gia returned, calm and smiling, to her place by his side and slipped into his hand a quarter.

In a daze he paid the reckoning, got the five cents change, and followed the young lady out; and not until they reached the ferry-slip did either speak.

"Is n't this great?" laughed Geo'gia gayly. "Now, you've ten cents, and I have a dime of my own, and we can get home."

"Say," broke in a complaining voice at her

elbow, "don't call a cop, but you took every cent and I can't git across the ferry. Won't you please lend me fi' cents?"

Johnnie had doubled up his fists as he recognized the voice of Slugger Sam; but Geo'gia put a restraining hand upon her escort's arm and surveyed the speaker.

"You'd better let him have those five pennies, Johnnie," she suggested, "and Ah'll walk all the way home with you."

"Why — er — " stammered the hero as he obediently passed over the change. "Geo'gia, you got enough to ride home — I kin walk alone."

"We'll both walk," she pronounced with an air that settled the question.

When the boat left the slip and the boy and girl were leaning over the forward rail together, Johnnie found his tongue.

"How'd you make him do it?" he asked in an embarrassed tone.

"Ah just went up to him and held out my hand and told him Ah wanted your money. Ah looked at a policeman near by, and your friend did n't have gumption enough to refuse me. That's all."

"But — but how did you know he had my money?"

Geo'gia flushed, laughed self-consciously, and looked at the longies.

"Ah have eyes," she declared demurely, "and Ah reckon Ah can use them."

Whereupon the little lady of thirteen tipped her pretty head to one side coquettishly, lifted her eyes, and used them.

But Johnnie Kelly was rearranging the lasso under his arm.

It was late that evening when Johnnie slowly climbed the four flights to the Kelly apartment. Still feeling uncomfortably tight around the equator, he dropped quickly into his chair at the table, sliding the lasso upon a crosspiece into which were screwed the legs of the table.

"Good avenin'," said Mrs. Kelly soberly.

"Evenin'," responded her son.

"I was afraid maybe I'd have to send out a relief ship," said Mrs. Kelly. "What made yiz so late?"

"Nothin'."

Mrs. Kelly surveyed him suspiciously. "Ye've got a black eye." She crossed the kitchen and swung him and the chair around.

"Johnnie!" said she sorrowfully, "I never t'ought you'd fool your mother like that. How did yiz do it?"

"Them ain't my pants," protested the boy.

Mrs. Kelly examined them incredulously.

"I tore mine — and — and borried these to come home in."

"And who lent you the shiner?"

Johnnie let loose a hearty laugh. "I give a pair o' sour peeps for that!"

"Come on, darlint," coaxed his mother; "tell me all about it while you eat your dinner."

Before him she set a heaping, smoking plate of corned beef and cabbage. Johnnie shoved it away from under his nose.

"I told you I would n't be hungry," he reminded; "if I tell, can't I jist have a piece of choc-er-late cake?"

CHAPTER XVI

TURN-COATS

THE next day Slugger Sam, meek and subdued, called for his trousers when he was sure Johnnie was not at home; then he walked out of Johnnie's life forever. The tale of his undoing, however, spread over Public School 199, and boys and girls, large and small, gathered like flies in the school-yard to look at the cowboy hero and his black eye. Envied, indeed, was he who could walk up to the lanky champion and slap him familiarly on the back. And Johnnie bore it all soberly, as became the idol of the school world.

But the defender of distressed maidens was not even a nine days' wonder. Under the unobtrusive, skillful hand of Principal Charles Hartley, 199 was preparing to launch its great War Work Drive at a much-advertised special meeting of the Parents' Association. The *élite* of the neighborhood and the big bugs of the city and the school system received special invitations. The nature of the meeting and the fact that 199 was the school of the veteran Mr. Hartley, the Grand Old Man of the system, had stirred several newspapers to detail special reporters to be on hand.

The affair was to be featured in the Sunday editions.

The principal looked about for some one to set the ball rolling. Well he knew the value of letting others get the credit. He asked Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan, as President of the Parents' Association, to make the great speech outlining the plan.

"You're a cannie mon, Mr. Hartley," replied Gilfillan; "but you don't need for to give me any glory to keep me in line. I'm with Uncle Sam in this fight to the end, so help me God! but I'm not fightin' with my mouth. I'm through with talk till the end of the war. Pass the sugar and put the spot-light on them that flourishes in it; and when you want wur-ruk, call on me — but do it privately."

When both Congressman Van Zarn and Banker Carter waived the privilege in favor of Mr. William Schuler, Hartley saw the wisdom of the suggestion and turned cordially to the man who had left Germany to escape Prussianism and *Kultur*.

William Schuler accepted with alacrity; for William Schuler was a thorough American, and furthermore, William Schuler, for obvious reasons, wanted everybody to know it.

Since the school was built on ground made historic in Revolutionary times, the programme

provided for the *début* was to be revolutionary in character. Regular lessons had gone by the board for a month during the excitement of getting ready. The school shop had become a property-room, the sewing-room was a costumer's, Mr. Parks's class were tired of being scattered around in various rooms while the stage-director rehearsed the lucky actors in the auditorium. And strongly did that director impress upon his company the awful disgrace of failure.

It was the day before the big event. Halfway down the center aisle of the school assembly-room, Johnnie Kelly and the rest of the British army, walking inside the pasteboard troop-ship, stopped to look back at the end of Manhattan Island — the principal's platform. Mr. Parks, the teacher in charge of the rehearsal, was too busy with the action on the stage to note this dramatic lapse. They set down the vessel — which resembled a deep bathtub with no bottom — and looked over the waist-high gunwales to observe their own humiliation in the last scene of the evacuation of New York.

There on the Battery flagpole, reaching close to the ceiling, was nailed the British flag. Bad enough had Johnnie felt when Mr. Parks, author, director, stage-manager, dressed the red-headed son of Erin in the hated British uniform; but for the teacher to assign to Johnnie the task of put-

ting up that flag and knocking off the stepping-cleats from the pole, was heart-breaking.

As the Continental army marched in through a doorway to the platform, all four of them in perfect step, the glum-faced Johnnie raised the ship's spanker-boom and held it against the mast to keep the sail from interfering with his vision.

Around the base of the pole were gathered a mob of six citizens, shaking their fists alternately at the British ship and at the cross of St. George above their heads.

"Halt!" shouted George Washington, *alias* Jack Van Zarn. "They have pulled down the pole, slushed the halyards, and — "

"For Heaven's sake!" protested Mr. Parks. "If you make that break to-morrow night, Jack, I'll sink through the floor."

George Washington apologized and corrected his speech.

"A mean trick, indeed," he went on. "Five pounds to the man who will climb that pole and put up the Stars and Stripes!"

Max Schuler strutted out.

"Ah!" said Washington, "my good man, what is your name?"

"John Van Arsdale," squeaked Max. "I am a sailor. I want no money for the job; but I'll climb that pole in spite of all the Tories from here to — from here to — to — "

The Continentals laughed. So did the citizens and the British army down the bay.

"Oh, oh!" groaned Mr. Parks — perhaps he said something more vehement under his breath — "from here to *Staten Island*."

Johnnie Kelly gloated openly.

"Max'll gum der whole show if Mr. Parks lets him be der hero," he predicted to his ship-mates.

Max overheard it. He was unnerved. But winding his legs and arms around the pole, he started to make good his boast. Halfway up, he slowed, slipped, struggled back with a desperate effort, began to glide once more, slowly at first, then, gathering momentum, landed with a bump on the supports toed into the flagstaff near its base.

A yell of irony from the redcoats greeted the performance.

"Zing!" shouted Kelly, pantomiming with both hands the crash of bass and cymbals upon the fall of the comedian. "Pipe der hero!"

Mr. Parks ignored Johnnie's hilarity, for Max's failure was too portentous.

"Max, you are no good. Get out of here."

"But I always done it before," wailed the fallen star.

"We can't trust to chance, young man. This play is too important. But I'll let you be the next

highest actor — the one who slushes down the pole.”

Max lost his head.

“‘T ain’t fair,” he whined. “My fader, he’s goin’ to make the big speech — he give a whole pail of liquid soap to wash off the theayter paint from our faces.”

Johnnie’s nose wrinkled with disgust.

“He’s cuttin’ me out, and still he ain’t satisfied. Ain’t that the Hun?” he demanded of his fellow-voyagers; “hear him brag about his father and that saloon soap what did n’t cost him nothin’! His father only gave it so Max could be the main guy in the show.”

Mr. Parks made no attempt to conceal his anger at Max.

“Young man,” he snapped, “I don’t care who your father is. Make up your mind within thirty seconds whether you’ll be a British soldier, or I’ll send you and your liquid soap out for good and all.”

Tears appeared in poor John Van Arsdale’s eyes as he slunk grumbling away from the pole, a dejected, discredited hero.

The stage-manager gave every man in the American army, including George Washington, a chance to climb the pole and become John Van Arsdale, but none did it to his satisfaction.

“Kelly!”

At the sound of his name Johnnie dived out of the ship, head first, and sprawled on the surface of the bay. He was on his feet in an instant and dashed over the harbor toward New York with a grin that threatened to make the top of his head an island.

“Shin up that pole,” commanded the teacher.

No unprincipled rascal ever turned traitor to a cause so willingly as Johnnie Kelly, wearer of His Majesty’s uniform. He swarmed up the pole as if it were a forbidden cherry tree. Little cared he that his white-paper belt and cross-belts were torn to shreds. What mattered it that King George’s red coat split up the back and the king’s paper-muslin trousers gave way in the seat? The enemy’s flag was at the top, and down it must come.

“Careful! Leave it there,” cautioned Mr. Parks. “Don’t tear it to pieces — we’ll need it to-morrow night. All right, Johnnie, come down. You’ll be John Van Arsdale.”

From his lofty perch the rechristened one smiled superiorly toward the envious, displaced Max, and winked his black eye.

“He can’t learn all my part so quick,” whined Max. “He’ll spoil it all. ’T ain’t fair. I bet he spoils it all. He’ll make everybody laugh. He always does. See if he don’t. ’T ain’t fair. My fader — ”

He stopped. There was a determined look in Mr. Parks's eye.

When the new Van Arsdale descended and came forward to receive instructions, it was with the full swagger of a stage star. He was in his favorite position — the center of the limelight. He was to carry upon his shoulders the climax of the whole play. And the success of the play meant much to Public School 199.

The change of characters necessitated extra work upon the part of every one connected with the production. What was left of Kelly's British uniform had to be made over in the sewing-room to fit a reluctant Max Schuler; but Schuler's sailor suit could by no stretch of cloth or imagination be made to accommodate the lanky Van Arsdale. A new one had to be fitted post-haste.

Meanwhile, many times through their paces went the theatrical company. It was hard work, especially for Kelly, to climb that pole again and again. And if he hesitated, if he took a little longer to get up, Max was ready to gloat and croak.

Max himself knocked off foot-cleats with a degree of skill; but his pretense of slushing down the pole with a dry brush and an empty pail was most unconvincing.

"Do it as if you really had something on the

brush," persisted Mr. Parks. "Don't wave it at the pole on one side and let it go at that."

The trouble was, Max was sulking; and Mr. Parks, realizing the boy's feelings, and knowing the part Schuler, Sr., was to take in the big event, was doing his best not to notice the disaffection.

At length Max's face lit up.

"I know," he cried, "suppose I use some plain water. It won't really make it slippery, but it'll look dandy and shiny and real, and — "

"No, no," objected Mr. Parks.

But Johnnie held up a deprecating hand.

"Let 'im do it, Mr. Parks, let 'im do it. I could climb dat pole no matter what he done. And he's right — it 'ud look swell."

It took considerable argument to convince the teacher; when, however, George Washington, the Continentals, and the British army joined in the appeal, he gave his consent to a trial.

This time Max Schuler did his duty well for Great Britain, but John Van Arsdale reached the top with surprising ease. Mr. Parks was obliged to confess that this touch of realism was a big improvement.

"But, Johnnie, if there is any danger of this water causing you trouble in your climb, I'd rather cut it out. This is the grand climax of the whole performance. It represents the spirit that

moved the men of '76; and we want people to see how it is a lesson to us to-day — that it is the spirit of John Van Arsdale, to 'get there' in spite of everything, that will carry us through to victory in this present war. If the last scene is a failure the whole analogy falls down."

"Can't we put in a couple o' more braces so it won't fall down? It *is* a bit shaky."

"Never mind, Johnnie," laughed the teacher, "you've got to be the main brace."

In the dressing-room after the rehearsal, Van Arsdale grinned at the new British private.

"Say, Max," he chuckled, "it's jist like real hist'ry, now — your fightin' for the British — did n't dey go hire a lot o' Goimans to fight us?"

"You got a swelled head," asserted Max hotly, for want of a better retort.

"Little Hessian," persisted the turn-coat; "t'ought you'd put one over on me, did n't you? But I'm a real pole-climber, not a slippery slider like the Dutch."

"It ain't fair," Max came back to his old protest. "My mudder t'inks I'm goin' to be the hero, and fader, he's goin' to make the speech, an' he gives a lot o' paper towels — an' — an' — liquid soap."

"Ah! take your old soap!" said Johnnie. Into the pail he dipped, and wiped a handful across

Max's mouth just as Max opened his jaws to make further comments.

The saloon-keeper's son coughed soap-bubbles for several minutes, and left school that afternoon declaring he would give as much as five cents if Johnnie would only go to pieces in the great scene.

"Look out, Johnnie," cautioned George Washington; "he'll be mad enough to do anything to make you get in wrong."

"Say," retorted the hero braggingly, "Mr. Parks counts on me, and I'm goin' to make dis show a go, or bust somethin'."

CHAPTER XVII

THERE'S MANY A SLIP

To the theatrical company of Public School 199, it was a long, long day between sunrise next morning and the great hour. The whole troupe were in full regalia by half-past seven, sky-larking and carrying-on behind the scenes; while the sewing-teacher, who was anxious that her costumes should hold together, fluttered and clucked about as excited as a hen with a brood of ducks. Her high-pitched scoldings and the sharp reprimands of Mr. Parks had only temporary effect; so he ordered all citizens and both armies, including George Washington, General Cunningham, and John Van Arsdale, into limbo on a long bench against the wall.

This *coup* had a sobering effect; and eagerly was accepted the permission, on promise of absolute quiet, for a few at a time to peak into the auditorium through the oval windows in the doors at each side of the platform.

The audience was no ordinary gathering, such as turns out for free evening lectures. Johnnie's first view was of Mrs. Schuler in a front seat; and judging by her face, he knew she would be an extremely cynical critic of the new Van Arsdale.



*The sewing-teacher fluttered and clucked about, as excited as
a hen with a brood of ducks*

In a back corner of the auditorium, a bevy of gayly dressed young lady-teachers — supposed to be ushers — flitted and tittered around a young man-teacher, in response, no doubt, to his clever remarks, while to their seats, unushered, wended papas and mammas and other members of the Parents' Association who had never been papas and mammas, but who took such a prominent part in school matters that none dare be refused special invitations.

At one side a number of the alumni, graduated long ago last June, were talking or listening like sober old men to the bald-headed first assistant, who now and then turned aside to answer the greeting of some sedate young lady whose hair had been done up for fully a year, or whose face had been done up afresh within the hour.

Within hearing distance of Johnnie, a dejected boy and his tight-lipped mother were attending to the remarks of serious-faced Sally Primton, who had taught for thirty years and never before had such a bad boy in her class.

"Gee whiz!" muttered Kelly; "betcher he knows what's comin' to him when he gits home! And dat's what's comin' to me if I don't make good to-night."

Half a dozen rough-appearing seventeen-year-olds were standing together in the rear, peering

about with such studied unconcern that Johnnie quickly spotted them.

"Huh!" he grunted; "wonder what winder that gang crawled through."

He breathed easier when the janitor got his eyes on the bunch and cleared them out with scant courtesy.

"I don't mind the old grads," muttered the leading man to General Cunningham, the British commander, "because dey'll only look wise and stick up deir noses a bit; but dat gang o' rough-necks only come in jest to queer us actors. I'm glad dey're fired."

The hero's last survey was of the line of notables perched on the long settee at the back of the platform, as sober as a row of wet fowls on a fence-rail. There, with Mr. Hartley, sat the President of the Board of Education, the district superintendent, and the whole local school board. Congressman Van Zarn was hobnobbing with Alderman McGinnis; while in the midst of four ministers, two priests, and a rabbi sat beefy Mr. Schuler, the orator of the occasion. Red, white, and blue were the colors in his button-hole; but red, and still more red became his face as the minutes dragged on. The perspiration poured down his neck and wilted his collar. He smiled and smiled, and looked as comfortable as a culprit reporting in Miss Primton's room at 3 P.M.

"Boys," observed Mr. Parks solemnly, "this is the most select, high-class audience that ever got together in this neighborhood. Our play comes at the end, after all the speech-making. We must not fail to drive our lesson home to them. Don't lose your heads, don't try to be smart; but act, act, ACT!"

"Leave it to me! Leave it to me!" boasted Van Arsdale.

At length the meeting opened. As for Johnnie, he was sure that more than two thirds of the people present were sitting the thing out merely to witness the theatrical performance at the end. But the audience drank in every word of William Schuler's speech, read carefully and with heat from a manuscript well edited by Charles Hartley. He told of the graduates of 199 who had already entered the service; he told of appeals from the Red Cross and kindred organizations. Wool must be bought with which the girls and women of 199 could knit sweaters, socks, helmets, and wristlets. Comfort kits must be made and filled. Clothes must be obtained for the homeless of Belgium and Northern France. All this would require willing hands, and money. Money would be earned by collecting and selling old newspapers, tin-foil, and old rubbers; by entertainments; and by donations. To get sufficient funds to start things in full swing in a hurry, each child

would be asked to contribute any amount up to half a dollar — the maximum being named as the desired amount if the contributor could afford it.

The orator wound up in a burst of patriotic pyrotechnics and sat down. There were speeches and more speeches and resolutions and committees appointed by Mrs. Van Zarn, vice-president, in the absence of President Gilfillan; and around ten o'clock everybody was tired, and everybody believed that the war was already won, and they all settled down for the entertainment portion of the programme.

To enable the minute men to fortify Bunker Hill, the principal and his honored guests had to desert the mound and crowd into seats with the common herd, the district superintendent, himself, cheek by jowl with the superintendent of the Rosevale Apartments.

The American army lay intrenched behind a desk. On came the redcoats. Up on the earthwork stepped a shaky General Warren to recite, "Stand! thegrounsyourownmurbraves!"

His voice indicated that he was n't quite sure whether or not his braves would stand; and Johnnie, who crouched in the trench behind him, was afraid that Warren's legs, if they shook much more, would also refuse to stand.

With wooden guns made in the school work-



CHARLES WRIGHT ENRIGHT

*A dejected boy and his tight-lipped mother were attending
to the remarks of Sally Primton*

shop, the British stormed the hill and with historic accuracy took it on the third attempt, and the British flag was unfurled on Bunker Hill.

The act was generously applauded; but Kelly received a reprimand for too strenuous acting.

"It was not necessary, Johnnie," said Mr. Parks, "to knock Schuler down the hill and under the piano."

Scene two, Valley Forge — George Washington Van Zarn stood before a tent wrapped in a greatcoat, while Johnnie Kelly and other Continentals sweated over an electric-lighted campfire, and an elongated young lady in the highest class, whose mother presented a singing-prize every graduation time, wobbled through a song that told the story.

Before the evening was over, Master Kelly had been present at Burgoyne's surrender; he had helped thrash the Hessians with considerable gusto at Trenton, and stood at the head of the American army when Lord Cornwallis's forces laid down their arms at Yorktown.

In every case when Max and Johnnie came together there were manifest attempts on the part of each to outdo the other; but Johnnie, being much the larger, had the advantage in physical combat. Max was bayoneted three times, tied hand and foot twice, and wounded half a dozen times before the war was over; yet he grinned so

good-naturedly that Johnnie began to lose interest in the game.

It took ten minutes and the united efforts of both armies to set up the pole at the end of Manhattan Island for the last act. When the curtain was drawn aside, it revealed the citizens of New York groaning under the yoke of British rule.

As the act progressed, it was quite evident that there was not a citizen of New York who was not a noble, unselfish hero, and not a redcoat in the whole army of occupation who was not a deep-dyed villain worthy to be hanged.

But virtue must always be rewarded, and now the city had to be evacuated.

General Cunningham, the provost marshal, *alias* Carson, waved his tin sword.

“No rebel flag shall go up that staff in sight of King George’s men,” he proclaimed. “Come, lively, now! Nail the colors to the mast! Unreeve the halyards, quick! Slush down the pole, knock off the stepping-cleats!”

Max Schuler advanced with brush and pail and a broad grin. He mounted the cleats to the top. Had the pail contained dynamite he could not have carried it more carefully. The red flag of Great Britain was thumb-tacked to the pole, down came the rope, and the little soldier proceeded to slush the pole with a dripping brush.

A slow, thorough job he made of it; slower than at rehearsal. So particular was he to touch every inch of the pole that Mr. Parks showed signs of uneasiness — the scene might drag.

“Hurry, Max!” he urged in a stage-whisper from his post behind the curtain at one side; but Max made an artistic job of it.

He set the pail down at the bottom of the staff, then climbed up again and knocked off the cleats.

“The pole is slushed, sir,” he reported, saluting General Cunningham. “Now let them run up their flag if they can!”

Johnnie behind the scenes caught the triumphant grin of the diminutive redcoat, and expressed his contempt by putting a thumb in each ear and wiggling, with great vigor, his extended fingers.

“Huh!” he sneered to George Washington, “he’s tryin’ to show off! And pipe the phiz on his mother!”

Mrs. Schuler’s hands were clasped contentedly on her capacious lap, and she was smirking right and left to catch any stray glances of admiration for her hopeful’s fine acting.

The British army dropped into the troop-ship moored to the edge of the platform, cast off the lines, picked the vessel up by the gunwales, and walked it up the aisle.

Rat-a-tat-tat! A drum beat a lively rattle and

out marched the Continental army, in fine order, followed by the city fathers and mothers. They halted near the pole.

Washington shaded his eyes dramatically.

"They have nailed up their colors, pulled down the halyards, the cleats are gone, and the pole is slushed!" he exclaimed indignantly. "A mean trick, indeed! Five pounds to the man who will climb that pole and unfurl to the breeze the Stars and Stripes!"

It was Johnnie Kelly's cue. He swaggered forward to announce himself John Van Arsdale.

"I want no money for de job," said he with a curl of the lip; "I'll climb dat pole in spite o' all de Hessians from here to Coney Island!"

He heard Mr. Parks gasp; he heard a titter throughout the audience, but took it as a compliment.

To the pole he strutted and threw off his coat. His eyes swept over the audience to drink in the thrill of it. All eyes were upon him. Even sophisticated old grads were interested. The honored guests were most gratifyingly attentive; while the young man-teacher and his lady friends actually condescended to turn toward the stage and cease their chatter.

Johnnie rubbed his hands on the seat of his trousers. He jumped, grasped the pole in his hands, wound his legs around it — and shot

down to the bottom with a jolt that made his teeth click.

He could not hide the surprise in his face.

He tried again with the same result. Probably the audience thought it most realistic, but Mr. Parks wore a look of chagrin as though he thought Johnnie was over-acting.

Johnnie did not want his teacher to believe that.

"No fen slips!" said the annoyed Van Arsdale, crossing two fingers of his right hand and holding them up to his teacher's view.

There was a short, surprised laugh from the American army, and, in the audience, from every man who remembered playing marbles back in his boyhood days.

Johnnie sprang to his feet with determination. He spit on his hands and made a flying leap for the pole. It swayed dangerously, and down it the climbing star slid like a fireman at a third alarm.

The British troop-ship down the harbor rocked with joy. Max Schuler was hopping up and down to the immediate danger of wrecking the craft, his face lit up with glee. Mrs. Schuler's smile was like that of the cat that had eaten the canary.

The audience sat up and craned their necks with intense interest, every face beaming appreciatively. Only the notables, squeezed into the best seats in the front row, looked serious,

as became scholars who understood historical accuracy.

“That’s enough, Johnnie!” clipped Mr. Parks from behind the scenes, as loud as he dared, in the tense silence of the room; “you’re spoiling it all. Get to the top this time, surely.”

It was do or die for John Van Arsdale. His hands were frothy. He knew there was something wrong, but Mr. Parks had given orders, the play must be saved — the top of that pole must be reached. Johnnie ran halfway across the stage, turned, and sprinted for the pole, leaping as high as he could. He hit it amidships, and down came the British flag, pole, hero, and all.

As Van Arsdale slid and fell to the floor, one foot encountered the “slush” pail, overturning it, and the hero landed flat in its contents as the liquid spread over the floor.

He scrambled to his feet and surveyed his hands and clothing.

His eyes opened wide in surprise and disgust.

“Gee whiz!” he exploded; “the little Hessian’s gone and used liquid soap!”

A roar of delight swept over the audience. Old grads, parents, great and near-great, seethed with merriment. Alderman McGinnis and Congressman Van Zarn were in stitches. Orator Schuler was gasping for air. The clergy were far from funereal; while the superintendent of the Rose-

vale Apartments in his exuberance cracked the district superintendent so hard between the shoulder-blades that the school official bit a laugh completely in two.

Mr. Parks mercifully drew the curtain.

Johnnie's last glimpse was of Mrs. Schuler waddling down New York Harbor toward the troop-ship and the overjoyed pole-slusher, wringing her hands and wailing above the merriment of the audience:

"Vat made you done it, Max? I say, vat made you done it?"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PASS-EE-FIST

WHEN class 7 B organized, who could be thought of for the exalted office of War Work Captain other than the champion bum-thrower, the defender of distressed maidens, John Kelly? He received every vote but one. Max Schuler voted for himself.

Thus had the attitude of his classmates undergone a great change since his entrance into the school. At the outset looked upon as a rough, uncouth alien, he had succeeded in winning them as his friends; and he felt most flatteringly honored.

With the honor came the desire to please; to prove himself energetic, bright, effective; to exhibit loyalty to country, to school, to teachers, to constituents; to demonstrate that no mistake had been made in choosing Kelly. In short, he was anxious to show off. Nothing less than one hundred per cent of the allotted maximum contribution would satisfy him. He flattered, coaxed, scolded, insisted, until delinquent ones were glad to surrender to escape his ready tongue.

The last day of the drive arrived.

Pockets north and pockets south, pockets east and others west, Johnnie Kelly emptied upon the

desk of the absent teacher. Returning to various depths a skate-key, a safety-pin, a harmonica, a bottle-opener, a piece of orange-peel cut to represent a set of false teeth, and an assortment of flag-buttons and cigar coupons, he left a pile of coins and bills.

"Fellers and girls," he addressed his classmates, "here goes for the report before Mr. Parks gits in, an' none o' youse is to open their trap."

Through his Cayenne-pepper hair Johnnie swept his fingers briskly to show how much at ease was he under the trying circumstances.

"Shut up, everybody!" cried Jack Van Zarn.

"Shut up! — Shut up!" shouted the rabble; with the result that it took Johnnie some time to obtain peace.

At length he was able to continue.

"Mr. Schuler said we oughter git fifty cents apiece from everybody in the school. Dere's thoity-nine in the class s' long 's Whitey 's got the mumps, so if every one o' youse paid a half, we'd have nineteen-fifty. Ter-morrer I give the money to Miss Bouck because she's treasuress for the school on account of her uncle bein' President of the Parents' Association, an' one tight-wad is forty-fi' cents shy. It ain't a girl, neither."

"Spy! — Slacker! — Boche! — Show him up!" could be heard amid the general uproar that followed.

"Shet up!" commanded Johnnie, cuffing Victor Caluchie alongside the ear.

Victor took the hint. So did the rest of the class.

"Here's the money — bills, halves, quarters, dimes, nickels, and" — Kelly paused to produce an effect — "and here, from the feller dat owes the other forty-fi' cents, is five measly pennies."

He quelled a rising demonstration with a look.

"When I name the feller dat don't t'ink enough of Uncle Sam or the school or Mr. Parks to pay his share, I don't want no doin's. He's — Isidore Cohen."

The class spun around to glare at a tall, thin, peaked-faced lad of fourteen. He shrank down in his seat, his shoulders even more rounded than usual, his arms folded so that his hands covered his elbows, except when he raised one to pull his collar away from his throat; and he kept his eyes on his desk.

"It ain't right to fight," he mumbled.

"Who said fight?"

"It ain't right to give things to people so they can fight better. Anyways, my mother says it's against the law to collect money from scholars."

"Ah, gwan!" sneered Johnnie. "So you're a pass-ee-fist? You don't need to put up a red cent, if you don't want to; but a pass-ee-fist what won't pay for an Amurrican soldier's socks and smokes

ought n't ter be allowed to go to an Amurrican school and wear the Amurrican varnish offen Amurrican school seats with his pass-ee-fist pants."

The class roared its approval.

"This is a free country," Isidore gathered up courage enough to mutter, "and everybody's got a right to do as he wants so long as he obeys the law."

"I'd hate to git hurted bad anywheres with only you around."

There was more laughter, and the meeting broke up as Mr. Parks entered.

"Boys and girls, you've been noisy," said the teacher, taking a quick, comprehensive glance about the room to fathom the cause of the turmoil. "If you cannot keep more quiet when I am out, I will not let you hold meetings."

His eyes took in Kelly and Cohen for an instant; but whatever suspicions he may have had, he did not reveal them. He hurried the class into line for assembly.

Johnnie Kelly set his jaw. Isidore Cohen was a traitor. Isidore must suffer for his meanness. Isidore should be ridiculed into shelling out that other forty-five cents in a hurry.

And Master Cohen spent an uncomfortable morning. Between lesson periods, while passing from room to room, Johnnie would squeeze one of

those five pennies between his thumbs and give vent to subdued squeaks. In Miss Primton's room, before the entry of the teacher, who was patrolling the hall with the rest of the teaching staff, he wrote on the blackboard:

France has the lilly,
England has the rose,
Ireland has the shamrock,
And the sheenie has the nose.

Geo'gia rubbed it out and told him he ought to be ashamed, even if Isidore was stingy. Johnnie put a rubber eraser behind each ear to make it stand out at right angles to his head, gesticulated with the palms of his hands up, and gibbered at her a vehement protestation in imitation Hebrew, to the delight of his classmates. But he kept out of reach of the little lady, for well he knew her predilection for using chalky board-rubbers upon young gentlemen who crossed her.

"Ain't he the slacker?" sneered Johnnie as the class came out at noon.

"Maybe his folks can't afford it," timidly suggested a satellite. "Look at his clothes."

"Gwan!" Johnnie ripped out; "don't youse know dem tightwad Jews wears old clothes and lives on garlic and gefuhlte fish jist to save money?"

"Sure!" chimed in Caluchie, breaking the last threads that united him to a useless coat-button

and flipping it into the gutter. When no policeman was around, he had begged his fifty cents from women passing on a busy street-corner.

Kelly proceeded: "Dey live like Shylock an' starve an' save an' den go back to Jerusalem an' live like lords the rest o' deir lives."

"All Jews don't," protested Jakey Einstein feelingly, for the audience seemed to concur in the implied condemnation of such a practice.

"O' course not, Jakey," Johnnie acquiesced. "I ain't knockin' youse. Most o' youse turns Amurrican, like the Irish; but don't Izzy make you sore?"

The mollified Jacob was only too glad of a chance to be on the side of the majority. He and Johnnie walked up the street together, just to show it was not a question of race.

When Johnnie got back from lunch, he went to Isidore's seat and spoke gently.

"Say, Izzy, we don't want you to pay if you're too poor — "

"I'm not too poor, I'm not poor," Isidore fairly screamed. "I'm not any poorer than you are, you big rowdy. I got lots of money. But I should pay my money for a lot of men-killers? I should pay my money because Mr. Schuler wants to be a big man? — because everybody says I must? — then this is n't a free country — it's worse than Russia — it's worse than Germany.

My mother says we keep our money for ourselves."

Isidore did not look into the face of his tormentor as he delivered this tirade, but let his eyes shift about the room.

Johnnie breathed a sigh of relief. He had spent an uncomfortable noon-hour wondering whether he had made a mistake; and now from Isidore's own lips came a vindication of the Kelly tactics.

"Oy, oy; so dat's the whyfor?" Johnnie chortled. "Well, you're nothin' but a stingy kike."

The class, taking the clue from the red-headed Irish boy, laughed derisively.

"Going to pay it by ter-morrer?" demanded the tormentor.

"No!" yelled Isidore.

Johnnie drew from his pocket a copy of a newspaper printed in Hebrew. He had come prepared to make Isidore's afternoon interesting. He pinned the sheet to the top of the blackboard in front of the room. With a ruler for a flute he began to tootle-tee-toot the tune of "Old Solomon Levi," pausing now and then to puzzle over a character on the sheet before him, trying several notes until he struck the right one, then resuming with vigor.

At one end of the corridor the third-floor staff were so vociferously discussing the Teachers'

Pension Bill that it would have taken a riot to attract their attention.

Kelly turned over the page and sang:

Oy, dot leetle Houston Sthrit,
Houston Sthrit, Houston Sthrit,
Oy, dot leetle Houston Sthrit,
Dot vass zo fine!
Dere's Norfolk Sthrit, Suffolk Sthrit,
Vendover, Pine;
But, oy! dot leetle Houston Sthrit,
Dot vass zo fine!

Isidore's black eyes flashed and his thin, bloodless lips drew to a line.

"You dassent do that if I was as big as you," said he. "You're a coward for teasing me just because I'm a Jew."

"Say," said Johnnie, "it ain't because you're a Jew; it's because you're so stingy mean. Dere's other Jews in dis school; but dere's Jews, and den dere's kikes. You're a kike. Betcher come upstairs two steps at a time to save your shoes, and it 'ud soive you right if you split your pants doin' it, too."

The boys were delighted with this sally; but Geo'gia cried, "Shame! Don't keep picking at him, Johnnie." And as several girls and one or two boys voiced their disapproval, Isidore took heart to retaliate in kind.

"You big Irish bully!" he snapped; "you're a

mean red-headed mick, that's what you are. Le' me alone!"

"If I was n't bigger 'n you, I'd show you dere ain't no yellor in me," sneered Johnnie, "and dat's more 'n can be said about you. — Say, ain't it about time you fished out dat other forty-fi' cents?"

Victor Caluchie doubled up his fist and twisted it at Isidore significantly, enabling the debtor to view the knuckles from various angles. Though Victor was a head shorter than he, Isidore must have comprehended that a fight was inevitable.

CHAPTER XIX

THE OTHER FORTY-FIVE CENTS

AT noon the next day Mr. Parks stopped Johnnie Kelly in the hall and handed him a note to read:

Dere mr Parks !

Will you kindly see to Viktor Caluchie, hee is for ever hiting Izzy, jesterday hee cam home from chool crying Viktor and a hohl gang of Italian, hit him and kick him right in the basement, because Izzy would not, do what he wantet, It looks to me es if them Italian rule this place, sory to say so, hopping you kindly attent to this matter.

Thanking you
thruoly

Mrs. F. Cohen

“Kicked him right in the basement!” repeated Johnnie. “Gee! Dat’s a new one on me.”

Mr. Parks hastened to explain. “She probably means that this happened in the inner yard of the school — it’s in the basement of the school. Now, neither of the boys will tell what started the trouble. I shall attend to Caluchie and his toughs; but you being the biggest boy in the class and captain — ”

“Want me to fix him?” interrupted Johnnie.

“No, no, don’t touch him. I simply want you

to do a little investigating and let me know tomorrow what is at the bottom of all this."

If Johnnie had not been studying his red-tan shoes, he might have caught the peculiar look in Mr. Parks's face — he might have guessed that the teacher was close to knowing the truth. Daniel Parks had kept his eyes and ears open since breaking in upon the riotous class-meeting the day before.

Johnnie was by no means elated. He went down the stone stairs without spirit enough in him to hit the tin partition and hear it boom from top to bottom.

"Jimminy Christmas!" he muttered. "Tell him ter-morrer! Feels like I'm goin' to be sick ter-morrer. Won't be no use tryin' to explain when he first hears it, but nex' day he'll be cooled off. I jist gotter be sick ter-morrer, and let some one else break it to him first."

And then, at the foot of the stairs he stumbled into Isidore Cohen and a little Dutch boy of class 4 A. Cohen was handing over two matzoth and receiving in return a cent.

"Here, Dutchy, give 'em back," growled Johnnie. "You miser!" he spat out at Isidore. "I'm still waitin' fer dat forty-fi' cents. Your old man ought to give you a good lickin'."

"You shut up!" cried Isidore in a sudden fierce burst of passion; "my father's dead."

Johnnie had started to draw back his fist; but the last words stayed the blow.

The 4 A boy began to cry.

"But I bought 'em," he whimpered. "Izzy says he ain't hungry."

Johnnie turned to his classmate. "You ain't had time to go home to lunch."

"My mother's downtown to work. I've had all I want to eat. Besides, why don't you let a feller alone?"

Kelly snatched the cent and returned it to the crying youngster.

"But I don't want the penny," bawled the child; "I like motzers. He sells me two every day last week."

Johnnie's expression underwent a change. His jaw dropped and the blood rushed to his cheeks. He looked dully at Isidore's blackened eye and cut lip, at the old, but clean, figured shirt, freshly torn and mended, at the patched coat, at the open toe of the carefully blackened shoe. He surveyed alternately the crackers in Isidore's hand and the cent in the extended palm of the whimpering 4 A child. Swallowing hard, he glared into the pinched Semitic face of Isidore Cohen, and awkwardly said the first thing that came into his head.

"Does your ma keep a store?"

"No, you big Irish bully!" retorted Isidore

recklessly. "She don't keep a store, she makes shirts, and she's just as good as your mother. Now, you leave me alone. I ain't hurt you, you big bully! Leave me alone."

Johnnie turned away quickly.

"Come," said he to the blubbering boy with the cent, "you tell your mamma no one's let take money in school." And he escorted the child to the door, while Isidore trembled and sniffed in the corner.

Kelly himself found a secluded window-sill in the outer yard. Here he spread out the class funds, arranging the coins and bills in piles according to denomination, the last being Isidore Cohen's five pennies.

He picked these up and turned each over as if it were a gold-piece.

"And forty-five more to come," he muttered. "Five into forty-five goes nine times. — Nine weeks!"

He ground his teeth.

"The Jew!" he exploded at length. Sweeping all the money into his hat, he carried it upstairs to Miss Bouck's room, where that teacher was eating her lunch.

"Here's the money for 7 B," said he. "It's forty-fi' cents shy, but you'll git dat in a few days."

All afternoon in the three rooms to which 7 B

traveled, Johnnie sat thinking. So absorbed did he become that Miss Primton gave him a charge of inattention in the class-book, and Mr. Wallace marked him a failure for not knowing his memory selection. At four o'clock when Miss Primton dismissed him (she had not forgotten to keep him in a month for the hat episode), it was a thoughtful boy that passed out of school.

The next day Kelly played hookey.

He did not show up the following morning; but in the afternoon the truant officer led him into the principal's office, where Mr. Parks was conferring with his white-haired superior.

The pedagogues ceased their conversation. It was of Johnnie they had been talking, and no pleasure had they found in the subject.

"Washin' cus-spitters an' scrubbin' the floor in a saloon," explained the officer. "Knew him by his red head. Has n't any workin' papers, but he looks so much over sixteen you can't blame the cafe keeper."

"Johnnie Kelly!" exclaimed Mr. Parks.

"And that's where you've been keeping yourself?" added Mr. Hartley; but there was no antagonism in the principal's voice. His sympathetic personality had invited the confidences of boys and girls for over fifty years.

Master Kelly said nothing.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked the principal.

Johnnie's lips were set in silence. He hung his head.

The principal and Mr. Parks exchanged significant glances.

"Now, see here, Kelly," said the elder man, "this is a grave offense. You have broken the Compulsory Education Law. Your father is a sober, sensible policeman; and though he cannot afford to give you a lot of pocket money to throw away, as many do in this school, he certainly has not countenanced your working in a gin-mill. I say nothing of the act of truancy. Why did you do it?"

Johnnie made no reply.

"Your breath is all right — it was n't for cigarettes nor for liquor. Come, I'm waiting for your explanation."

But the usually loquacious Johnnie was dumb.

"Very well, then," said Mr. Hartley. "Is your father on duty now?"

"No, sir, he's home."

"Go home and tell him I wish him to step around here. If you do not return in an hour, I shall suspend you and let the case go to trial before the district superintendent."

Johnnie passed out of the office, and the door closed behind him.

Within, the two men faced each other.

"He did n't squeal!" said the old man, a thrill of loving admiration in his voice.

"Mr. Hartley," said the teacher, "can't you guess why he did it?"

The old man nodded, a tender light in his eyes.

"You are not going to let his father thrash — " Mr. Parks protested.

"I am. If the boy sticks to his guns, as he did just now — sticks to the bitter end — he will prove to us, and to himself — which is more important — that he is a *man*!"

Just outside Johnnie came face to face with Isidore Cohen.

"Here's three cents more," said Isidore apologetically. "I did n't sell motzers, I run errands. But I give it because I like Mr. Parks. I got no use for fighters."

"See here, Izzy," said Johnnie brusquely, "now I see different. I don't blame you for gittin' sore. In about half an hour I'm goin' to git a whoppin' big lickin' off my old man, an' I'm glad of it. It's comin' to me for treatin' you dirt, but dat ain't what I'm goin' to git it for. Now, you lied when you said you was a pass-ee-fist."

"You're another! I did n't," retorted Isidore as loud as he dared, for classes were in session behind the closed doors along the corridor.

"Yes, you did. You don't have to make-

believe to me any more, Izzy. I'd 'a' lied, too. I know how you felt wid de gang around. You're all right, even if you are a kike, an' I'll lick any gazoob what don't treat you white."

Tears of humiliation came into the Jewish boy's eyes.

"But I want to pay my fifty cents like the rest, an' I can, too."

"Sure!" Johnnie agreed. "Here, Izzy, I've been out in business for a change. Got a persition as floor-scr — floor-manager. Mr. Hartley won't let me stick to the perfession, but I got me pay for a day and a half. Give this to Miss Bouck and tell her it's the other forty-fi' cents for 7 B for the War Fund, and give it out loud when some o' our class is wid you."

"I don't want it," declared Isidore indignantly; "I want to pay my own money. I ain't a beggar."

"Won't take it?" Johnnie scowled. "You take it, or I'll soak you in the eye! I ain't givin' it to yer — I'm lendin' it. You gotter pay me back sometime — any old time — and jist git this earful" — he made preparations as though to plant his fist in the pit of Isidore's stomach — "if you let on where you got it, I'll bust in your motzer-basket!"

CHAPTER XX

EAVESDROPPER

THOUGH Johnnie got the licking he expected, Kelly, Sr., administered the dose with his customary maximum of motion and minimum of power, so no physical complications set in. There was, however, another complication. The day he played hookey to earn the other forty-five cents was the last day of the month that Miss Primton had condemned him to stay in after three for putting Mr. Hartley's silk hat into the piano. The next time he appeared in her room she indicted, tried, and convicted him within two minutes for gross disobedience of orders, and sentenced him to another two weeks.

Dismissed by Sally one afternoon at four o'clock, he slunk into his own classroom and entered the coat-closet to hide his books and get his hat. He felt blue, sullen, and criminal, for Miss Primton had spent the detention hour telling him where he would land unless he reformed.

Before he had time to emerge, he heard Mr. Parks's voice in the room. He was in no mood to present himself before his official class teacher, so he kept quiet, confident that at such an hour the

teacher had merely stepped in to lock up preparatory to going home.

"Miss Bouck," he heard Mr. Parks call across the hall, "would you like to see some of these gems of composition?"

That was the moment Johnnie should have chosen to show himself; but he hesitated.

"I am late now," came the reply. "I can spare only a very, very little time. Will it take long?"

"Oh, no! about five minutes," the man assured her, taking from his mouth the tacks intended for the dilapidated map of the United States that, half torn from its pole, hung against the blackboard; and as a guarantee of good faith he took off his wrist-watch and placed it on the desk in plain view.

"Very well, then; five minutes," she agreed, and Johnnie heard her enter the room.

She took the proffered seat by Dan Parks's desk. From a drawer piled by masculine art, or artlessness, with a heterogeneous mess of newspapers, school periodicals, syllabuses, notebooks, plan and progress books, children's home-work, test papers and what-not, he fished out a stack of seven-by-eight-and-a-half-inch papers with red lines near the left-hand margin and holes at the top to fasten them together — a proceeding which had as yet been neglected. Spattered over the multi-angled scrawls of struggling Young

America, stood, in accusing, flaming red, carets for omissions and checks for punctuation; while glaring P's and C's and G's warned each embryo author of paragraphing, capitalization, or grammar astray.

"Here," said the exhibitor, taking post beside her chair; "I've gathered together all the good ones I could find. Here's one of Johnnie Kelly's on a great disaster:

The explosion distroyed many fine buildings; homes, lives, schools, and other fine parks was all distroyed. Very few homes was left standing, so the whole remaining popularity of the people had to live outside in the open air. Some lost their homes. Some lost their parents or children. Some was burnt to ashes. The dead and dying was supplied with pervisions, medical supplies and dwelling-places. A lotter help is being gave by monks and monkeys.

"Johnnie has crossed out those two words and changed them to, 'he-monks and she-monks.'"

Helen Bouck laughed heartily.

"He certainly had trouble with that feminine," observed Dan.

"Is n't he a dear, funny boy?" was Helen's remark.

"He's true blue," pronounced Dan.

Had Master Johnnie, averse to playing eavesdropper, contemplated making his presence known, this intimate characterization was enough to discourage him. He slid down to the floor and

settled into as comfortable a position as he could in the cramped quarters to await release.

It must have been an interesting set of papers. Daniel Parks drew his high-chair close to the desk. Miss Clack peeped in inquisitively, and precipitately fled. The visage of Miss Primton, on her way to a meeting of the Joint War Council on the first floor, clouded the doorway like a gloomy nimbus, and rolled by with distant mutterings. Yet the two at the desk with heads close together read and laughed and chattered, unwittingly. In his oak frame on the wall, Sir Galahad gazed away from the pair discreetly. The United States, in colors ranging from somber to gay, drooped against the blackboard behind them, the new city in Arizona, standing out prominently, as forlorn and desolate as its founder, now marooned in the coat-closet. Directly under the eyes of the man and woman the fleeting seconds were ticked off by the little wrist-watch, neglected and forgotten, even at length to make way for Dan's elbow, pushed amid the topsyturvy mass of papers that littered the top of the desk; whence still came its muffled, rhythmical accents, faithful even in banishment.

There came a portentous silence. Then Dan spoke.

"Helen, why won't you let me call on you?"

"Why — I — you — my uncle — "

"I expect to start for the Officers' Training Camp at Plattsburg in a few days, and, Helen, I can't go without telling you —"

Her chair was pushed back and Johnnie knew she had risen.

"Don't, please don't," she interrupted.

"But I must!" declared Dan emphatically. "These are precious days. My time is short. Is there something about me that —?"

"Oh, I should not have let you — let myself — let things —"

She stood pulling her handkerchief again and again through her hands.

"But you have," said he quietly. "Helen, it is not the time for us to beg the question. I do not know what is in store for me in this War of Wars; but I know that for me life has just begun. Into what a short space it will be crowded, God only knows. I know that there is only one woman, only one for me. I'm selfish. When my time comes to go 'Over There,' I want some one to come back to — God willing — I want *you*."

Unmistakable were the sounds of Helen's muffled sobs. She had her handkerchief to her mouth and bravely sought to control herself.

"I could n't help speaking," Dan apologized.

"Oh, if I can only make you understand!" said she. "Do you know why I came from the country to teach in the city schools?"

"I don't know — I don't care — all I know is —"

"Wait," she interrupted. "You *must* understand. The life I saw before me in Helderberg filled me with loathing. Those who were young girls when I was a child jumped suddenly into dreary maturity. There was no transition stage. They romped and tried to be gay for, oh! so short a time! And such gayety! Strawberry festivals, the circus, patent-medicine shows. They married and settled down to a life of church, chickens, and children, with gossip as the most exciting pastime. Some natures may thrive in Helderbergs, but it would have driven me insane. I wanted to *live!*" Her wet eyes sparkled; she clenched her hands and tilted back her head. "I'd rather *live* for five years than merely exist for fifty."

"It is what I ask you to do," cried Dan, reaching for her hand; but she drew back.

"That is not all. In a burst of confidence I told my mother's brother, Alexander Gilfillan — how I felt. He was visiting us at the time. On his return to New York, he wrote to me. I carry the letter with me — because — I've looked at it many times lately — I'll read a portion — I'll cover his mistakes of English — you know his failing — but he's been kindness itself":

Your father has consented to my making this proposition to you. Now that you have completed your course in

the training-school for teachers, come to New York to live with me. Take the examination for a teacher's license. I'll get you a place in the City Public Schools. I'll foot all your bills — for the salary of your first few years won't do that — and you'll owe me nothing but loyalty. But on one condition. I know what it means for a pretty girl like you to come to New York. I don't want you running off and getting married just when I get you nicely settled. It would not be fair to me, nor would it be fair to yourself. Coming from the country into the glamour of the big city, you will not be capable of a sensible judgment in picking a man until you have had time to look around and see what the world is like. Guard yourself, and you'll have no heart-aches.

Let us set a definite period. I want you in my home. I want you to be a daughter to me. After five years you will be free to do as you please. This is the one condition. If it is too hard a one, if you believe you have not enough self-control to carry out your part of the bargain without making your life miserable, stay in Helderberg. If you accept, my home is your home; go and come as you please, have what friends you choose; the house shall be open to them.

“But, surely, that is all swept away,” protested Dan earnestly; “the world is upside down, now. That condition was not foreseen. Now it's preposterous!”

She shook her head slowly. “Maybe — in five years —”

“Five years? Nonsense! The next five years mean life or death to civilization! To you and me, Helen, they are the years of life. I am going to

see your uncle to-night and put it up to him fairly. He's not an ogre."

"No; he is kindness itself, I tell you. I — I know he does n't like you; but he'll simply say, 'Helen can decide for herself.' You know what that means. I am half Scotch."

"Such a promise deserves to be broken," argued Dan heatedly.

But the telling of her story had helped the girl to conquer herself. "I made the agreement with my eyes wide open," she declared: "and if he does not release me willingly and whole-heartedly, I'll keep my promise. My one unforgivable mistake was in letting you go so far — Come. I am going home."

"And I am going to see you home and face the music."

The pair walked out of the room together in the dusk.

From the cramped quarters of the clothing-closet crept a stunned, shaking boy. He had difficulty in analyzing his own feelings. Intuitively he felt that he had overheard something sacred. He had been a witness to that which filled him with a vague awe. It made him think of his mother and of God; and he knew that he would never tell. Wild horses could never drag a syllable of it from him.

He approached the desk and, searching out the wrist-watch, touched its face reverently.

“His wrist-watch!” he whispered. “He’ll look at it some day before he goes over the top!” The boy was husky with emotion. “And she! — She can’t ever like nobody else — she just can’t! — Oh, if I could just take old Gilvillain and — and —”

He clenched his hands and ground his teeth. Again he looked at the wrist-watch by the reflected lights from the street below. It was nearly seven. Slipping the watch carefully into his pocket, he, too, crept out into the hall.

CHAPTER XXI

RUNNING THE GANTLET

JOHNNIE went down a pair of stairs to the basement and found the door at the foot locked. He came up to the first floor and tried another flight with the same result. Further investigation proved that the only possible way to get out, unless he wished to hazard a drop from a window, was through the first-floor assembly-room to the visitors' entrance. He found Dan Parks and Helen Bouck standing just outside of the shaft of light coming through the broad doorway at the rear of the center aisle. He could hear voices within. He was behind the partition that set off a stairway within a few feet of the pair. They did not see him and he did not make his presence known.

From his point of vantage he could see, better than they could, what was going on within. A meeting was in progress. A joint committee from the Alumni Association, the Parents' Association, and the teaching staff were busy with War Work plans. They had met at five o'clock to save lights, but the meeting had evidently been a slow one or a very busy one. Mr. William Schuler, who a few days before had superseded Alexander

MacLaurin Gilfillan as President of the Parents' Association, held the floor.

"The Cohen family is starving and in need," he was saying. "Ve vill go and gif aid to them and tell them how this school vill take care of them. Mrs. Cohen is a good voman and —"

"Charity with a brass band!" snapped Gilfillan. "If she has a spark of pride, she'll order you out for your impertinence."

"Ven folk is down and out, Mr. Gilfillan, they haf to swallow some pride."

Gilfillan's answer was a snort.

"Another thing, Mr. Hartley," went on the new president. "I vish to take this public opportunity of announcing that I vill gif a fine vatch to the boy or girl in P. S. 199 that sells the most Liberty Bonds this time."

He glanced about and beamed with pleasure when his audience applauded. Gilfillan alone withheld approbation. He looked disgusted.

Johnnie did not listen to any more. Dan and Helen were arguing in whispers.

"We'll wait. They'll adjourn pretty soon," said Helen.

"They may remain here an hour," said Dan. "The longer we hold back, the worse it will be. What difference does it make? We have done nothing wrong."

"A man can't understand. There's Mr. Hart-

ley and Miss Primton, and Miss Clack — an inveterate gossip — and other teachers, and my uncle, and all those young men graduates. See the clock over the platform? It's after seven o'clock."

"What if it is? Nonsense! We are not children."

"We might go separately," she suggested.

"That would surely look worse. You are unnerved to-night, Helen. Just brace up and we'll walk through, as if it were the most natural thing in the world."

He took her by the arm as if he had the right to decide for her, and she obediently acquiesced. The long march commenced.

Mr. Hartley, standing immediately in front of the piano at the other end of the aisle, was addressing the gathering. He saw them, hesitated, stopped speaking, nodded to the pair across the sixty feet of intervening space, and smiled cordially and most innocently. Evidently not a thought that Helen feared came into that dear old man's mind. But his action caused every person in the room to turn around.

Dan was not holding Helen's arm, but they were walking side by side. Dan smiled and nodded with perfect serenity. The room was absolutely still except for the footfalls of the pair.

At that instant some ill-mannered dare-devil, probably an alumnus who had not yet reached the age of discretion, commenced the familiar air of the Lohengrin Wedding March. There were eight notes — that was all.

It was enough. The smiles of the audience were not the same as that of Mr. Hartley, waiting down there at the piano like the officiating clergyman. One or two of the younger people snickered. Miss Clack gloated. Miss Primton wore her most shocked, disapproving face; while Alexander Gilfillan's countenance beneath his red hair was fairly purple with mortification and anger.

It was a long, long walk, from the rear of the room to the front where Mr. Hartley stood, yet Dan and Helen accomplished it nobly. Perhaps she could not help signs of embarrassment, but she maintained her smile throughout. They exchanged good-evenings with Mr. Hartley as they passed; they rounded the piano and vanished through the doorway — Helen with an accelerated step — just as the good-mannered people of the gathering recovered sufficiently to break the silence by casual conversation.

Johnnie Kelly was furious. He was too angry to find words with which to express his opinion of the assembly and especially of Gilfillan. He buttoned his coat, ran his hand through his hair

to put it in shape, and just as Mr. Hartley cleared his throat to resume his interrupted remarks, down the center aisle paraded the red-headed boy.

Again necks twisted around. With hands stiffly at his side, chin in, and shoulders back marched Johnnie, each foot planted with a firm, resounding tread that shook his tousled red hair like the plumes of a knight.

Though snickers increased to a ripple of merriment, neither to the right nor left looked he. His defiant eyes were fastened upon one countenance, the somber visage of Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan down in the front row. He passed that gentleman with nose tilted in proud disdain, made a sharp military turn in front of Mr. Hartley — to the principal's unconcealed amusement — another right-angled turn when opposite the exit, and marched out as stiff as an automaton, followed by a roar of hearty laughter.

CHAPTER XXII

CANNING THE SUB

"GLOOM, gloom, nothin' but gloom!" grumbled Johnnie Kelly. Mr. Parks was not in the classroom, and there was too loud a clangor from Amsterdam Avenue, too much buzz from their own forty tongues, for the rest of class 7 B to be disturbed by the complaint of the lanky War Work Captain.

He jammed one ungainly foot into the trash-basket to make room for more papers.

"Don't wish nobody no hard luck," he mumbled, to himself, "but I would n't cry if somebody sprained her face or somethin' and took a vacation — now, particu'ly — the old cat! Bet she'll have a sore throat before three, talking about las' night."

He wiped a hand on his trousers to remove the sticky candy left in a desk and muttered an opinion of the party who had put it there. Certainly he was not in a happy mood.

A hush made him glance toward the door. The principal was hypnotizing the youngsters into rigid order. Finding himself transfixed by the man's eye, Johnnie put the waste-basket under Mr. Parks's desk, dusted off the desk with his

hat — which he then stuffed into his back pocket — and slid awkwardly into a seat, his long legs sprawled into the aisle. And not until the boy was safely settled did Mr. Hartley speak.

“You will have a substitute to-day,” he announced. “I know you will be proud to hear that Mr. Parks received his official notice last night and has gone to Plattsburg to become an officer in the army.”

The class was too surprised for an instant to speak or move. Then the boys broke loose with cheers and handclapping while Mr. Hartley smiled indulgently. The girls made a feeble effort to join in the demonstration, but their emotion was of a different nature. Johnnie Kelly sat like a statue of despair. Not a sound did he utter; not a muscle moved. The applause died down, giving place to a suspicious sniffing on the girls’ side as Mr. Hartley continued.

“As we must make immediate arrangements to prevent serious interruption to the essentials of your programme, I have arranged for Miss Primton to take Mr. Parks’s subjects, while the substitute will teach science, music, and physical training.” The principal took out a notebook. “First period to-day, physical tra —”

“No, ’t ain’t, Mr. Hartley,” interrupted Johnnie in a sepulchral undertone, “you’re lookin’ at Monday’s skeedule.”

“You mean ‘schedule,’ Johnnie. Thank you. To-day, first period, music; second, arithmetic with Miss Primton; then girls to 302 for sewing, and boys, science in this room for the two remaining periods. — Humph! That means the substitute three periods out of four.”

He looked doubtfully at Johnnie Kelly’s doleful, scowling face.

“Johnnie,” he observed, “something tells me to make sure of you to-day. Your tongue does most of the mischief, I believe; and I am too busy to be annoyed by any of your antics. Repeat after me: ‘To-day in this room —’”

“‘To-day in this room —’”

“‘I am not to speak a word unless asked a question by the teacher —’”

Johnnie repeated.

“‘And then in as few words as possible.’”

The boy got through it.

“There!” declared Mr. Hartley with a sigh of relief, “I think we have forestalled a lot of trouble.”

He pushed the door open until it was held by the patent catch, and hurried on to straighten out other complications arising from Mr. Parks’s sudden departure.

Johnnie dragged himself to his seat. The boys, serious and excited, divided between pride in Mr. Parks and ugly resentment against their own bitter fate, were engaging in a buzz of conversa-

tion. There were not half a dozen dry-eyed girls in the room. More than half were crying as if their hearts would break. And there, at Johnnie's elbow, Geo'gia's head was down on her desk encircled by her arm, her sunny hair rioting over the desk, her shoulders heaving.

Johnnie observed that the sleeve of her white middy was perilously close to the inkwell and one golden curl was poised on the very brink, so he quietly removed the well and set it on his own desk where it could do no harm. Glancing around, he was relieved to see that no one had noticed this lapse into the rôle of good Samaritan.

He leaned over so that she should be sure to hear. "Baby!" he sneered; "big, blubber baby!"

Geo'gia's grief, however, was too genuine to be checked by teasing; and Johnnie was quick to see that the thing for him to do was to let her have her good cry.

For a time he sat gazing out of the window. He had seen Miss Bouck this morning when she walked into her room, took off her hat and jacket, and hung them in her locker. Her step, her motions, were not like those of the Helen of yesterday; and one glimpse of her face had told him the story. He thought of this now.

"The red-headed, crusty, selfish old pill!" he growled, which left no doubt of whom he was speaking.

Having thus relieved his mind, Kelly looked around for something to do, for he could not keep idle. Rummaging in his desk, he found the cardboard back of a six-by-nine-inch writing-pad. Three slashes of a jack-knife cut the card into strips, which, with paper fasteners, he fashioned into a collar around his neck. Attaching his key-chain to this, he dropped the other end of the chain into his inkwell.

The opening in the top of the well suggested the shape of a doorway. With pen and ink the young man drew on the metal top a dog-house and printed the warning:

BEWEAR OF THE DOG!

Putting his hands on the desk and sticking out his elbows to represent the bow legs of a bulldog, he let out a whine. No thought of amusing his classmates entered his red head. He did not wish to talk to them, so he was playing all by himself.

The whine grew into a subdued howl:

“Bow — wo — o — ow! OO — oo — oo!”

He sat silent for some time, looking out of the window, wondering what the sub would be like. Would she be tall or short? Fat or skinny? A loud-voiced ruler-smasher or a scared rabbit?

Back went his head and he yowled toward the open air:

“Bow — wah — ow — oo — oo! Boo-oo-wow!”

So earnestly did he strive to be realistic that he failed to notice the sudden hush in the room.

"OO — oo — oo — oo!" he wailed.

"Well, what is the matter?" inquired a man's voice in the doorway.

The performer turned to face a dapper young man in gray, with a blond fuzz on his upper lip. The boy was disconcerted. Could it be that the substitute was a man? A man in place of Mr. Parks? That would not be so bad. He preferred men teachers. They did not treat a fellow like a kid, as did most women, nor like a criminal, as did Sally Primton. The boy grinned sheepishly. He would have chosen a better introduction to a man.

"I've lost me ma-ster!" was his plaintive answer.

"Who is your master?"

"Mr. Parks — I guess it's *Captain Parks*, pretty soon."

"You don't look very much like a regimental mascot. You remind me more of a street mongrel," said the young man, grinning sarcastically; and the boy could feel his freckles squirm.

The boys laughed, some of the girls looked up curiously, and the grin of the substitute broadened. The boys laughed louder and more girls showed interest. The teacher surveyed Johnnie with a contemptuous smile, under the influence of which the collar and chain vanished and the

boy felt resentfully cheap. This was not a man like Mr. Parks.

Meanwhile his classmates roared. In fact, they tried to prove that never in their whole lives had they heard a more laughable remark.

"That will do," suggested the new master in a condescending tone.

But the calm did not come. The boys of the class were seething with merriment that threatened to burst a dozen blood-vessels and suspender buttons. One or two of the more mercurial girls joined in.

"That will do!" repeated the humorist more sternly, ceasing his own laughter and banging a ruler sharply on the desk. There was something in his manner that brought silence.

"I don't want another exhibition of that kind," proclaimed the blond young man. "Perhaps you have been in the habit of acting that way, but you will not do it with me."

He addressed this last directly at Johnnie Kelly and waited as if expecting some retort from the big Irish lad. But Johnnie held his peace; though he began to see red. "Is he knockin' Dan Parks?" the boy asked himself. "He'd better be careful!"

As the substitute bent over the desk to get out the roll-book, Johnnie curled a scornful lip, slapped his own wrist, and drew back the chastised member quickly to indicate pain. He turned

toward his classmates and held his pug nose between his thumb and forefinger; and fearing that some might not interpret the pantomime correctly, he moved his lips, without sound, to form the single word, "Rotten!" Next, he pulled out his upper lip and looked at it cross-eyed in search of a down as cute as that of the elegant substitute.

Then the lesson commenced.

The substitute blew on the pitch-pipe. "Sing, 'Do, me, sol,'" he directed.

Those of the girls who could control their sobs and one or two boys obeyed.

"You big boys can sing. Come on — 'Do, me, sol!'"

Johnnie added his growl.

"Again. I don't like your 'sol.' Sing 'sol.'"

This time Johnnie and his pals strained every muscle in their bodies to put power into their "sols." Still the teacher was not satisfied. They "sol'd" and they "sol'd" with might and main until they were red in the face and got a violent fit of coughing; and — the door opened.

It was a sad-visaged principal who walked up to the substitute and whispered, then addressed the class.

"Boys, I've listened to the wail of lost 'sols' enough for the morning. I respectfully request that you now sing more angelically. Mr. Sinclair,

send me any boy that annoys you." And he walked out.

The class toned down, while an anæmic melody made attempts to show signs of health.

However, there was music in 306. Those who did not sing contributed their share by sticking pins in between the iron and the woodwork of the seats and twanging them with much expression. Johnnie slyly removed a hairpin from the head of Geo'gia — her face was still buried on her arm. He bent the pin skillfully and rolled it under his foot. The result was like the clicking of the radiator. Indeed, there was a roomful of weird music in 306 — music that never rose to the power of a *Te Deum* or a *finale*, for, with Mr. Hartley somewhere in the building, that would have been dangerous.

A few spitballs and paper wads were exchanged, and once a chalky board-rubber from Van Zarn's hand bounced from Johnnie's head and hit the map, causing a heavy snowfall that completely buried Johnnie's city in Arizona.

By the end of the period Mr. Sinclair had boasted much, and failed to deliver. He had threatened and promised six separate times, and not once kept his word. The majority of the girls recovered sufficiently from their grief to whisper and snicker with perfect freedom, while he concentrated his efforts on the boys, and succeeded

in keeping in order only Johnnie Kelly. And Johnnie, bound by the principal's fatal sentence, felt like a martyr tied to the stake and slowly consumed by flames while his comrades danced about in happy revelry.

"How did they behave after I spoke to them?" inquired Mr. Hartley from the doorway as the classes changed rooms at 9.55.

"Oh, I did n't need any help," replied the substitute. "They quickly saw that I'd stand no fooling. I've got them eating out of my hand as gentle as kittens." And he looked along the line with the air of a Napoleon.

He stepped closer to Mr. Hartley and continued, but unfortunately loud enough to be overheard by the larger boys of 7 B, "I guess they've been in the habit of running wild, have n't they? — Teacher too easy? I'm toning them down. Why, that big red-headed loafer did n't dare open his mouth."

Kelly saw Mr. Hartley draw aside the confident beginner and the boy caught enough of the principal's remarks to know that the younger man was receiving much-needed advice. But judging by what Johnnie knew of Sinclair, the advice would be wasted.

Class 7 B passed from the substitute's room to Miss Primton's room for the second forty minutes of the day. As Johnnie took his seat he found

the eyes of every boy and girl in the room turned upon him. He said nothing. What chance had he of tearing Clarence Sinclair apart and scattering the pieces when his chief weapon, his tongue, was spiked?

He puzzled over the problem for some time, until at length the idea came to him. There was no doubt in his mind that his comrades were as anxious as he to put the sub in a proper place. He could count on their aid.

"Fellers," said he quietly, "he's knockin' Mr. Parks somethin' fierce, hey?" — and they agreed. "Did you ever see a dog sneak when he's got a can tied to his tail?"

"Yeh," chorused the group in an eager whisper.

"Let's can the sub," suggested Kelly.

All gathered closer to Johnnie, and before they were interrupted by the entrance of Miss Primton, Johnnie had outlined his campaign clearly.

Never was the bell for change of periods more welcome than that which came at the end of the arithmetic. The girls traveled along to the sewing-room, while the boys, with all too sober faces and angelic manners, started for Mr. Sinclair's room, Johnnie carrying a set of papers given him by Miss Primton.

Over the desk leaned Clarence Sinclair. Stepping inside, out of sight of other teachers along the hall, each boy put a hand on the shoulder of

the one in front and marched around to the back of the room in lockstep.

Sinclair looked up. "Class, halt!" he commanded.

The leader stopped short — very short. The others shoved forward, causing a staggering, a pushing together, a seething confusion; but not a single word was spoken.

Mr. Sinclair eyed the class scornfully. "So this is the bunch of loafers I must deal with, this period?" he sneered. "Stand up straight and keep still. Here, you red-headed tough at the end of the line, efface that grin. Now, pass to your places quietly, or I'll know the reason why."

The 7 B loafers tiptoed to their seats with such fantastic high-stepping and little shudders of apprehension that it nettled Clarence, but as they made absolutely no noise, he refrained from comment.

"We will now have our science lesson," observed the substitute, poring over the contents of a desk-drawer; "if I knew what topic you took last lesson, I could go right on and give you a very interesting lesson."

"Hot air," said Johnnie Kelly, interpreting it as a question.

Sinclair jumped to his feet scowling.

"What did you say?" he snapped out.

"Hot air," repeated Johnnie soberly.

"What do you mean?" demanded the teacher severely.

"Hot air," reiterated Johnnie. "That's straight. Here's the papers Miss Printon give me to give to you."

"If I thought —" began Sinclair, eyeing Kelly; but he did not say what he thought. He took the proffered papers. They were the reports on the topic of the effect of heat upon the atmosphere. The teacher read one sentence:

When you want to fly a baloom you must have a match with wich you light a sponge soked in alcahawl and a boy to hold the baloom.

"Who is this Johnnie Kelly?"

The laughter of the class singled out the author.

"I might have guessed it," remarked the teacher; and Johnnie would gladly have "soked Sinclair in alcahawl" and touched a match to him.

The substitute began to talk heated atmosphere, while the class sat in dumb silence.

The campaign of vengeance was opened by Captain Kelly. He nudged his neighbor, the poke was passed along, and soon twenty-one pairs of eyes peered intently at the vacant spot upon the wall above the lecturer's head. Faces were sober, bodies as still as statues. They stared and stared and did nothing else.

Sinclair was slow to observe. He continued to spout hot air and its properties for fully four

minutes before he realized that something was wrong. He surveyed the upturned eyes and hesitated. Then he swung around to look at the blank wall, realized that he had been fooled, and turned to view the class again. With nothing could he find fault. Their order was perfect — painfully perfect.

Before the teacher had time to analyze the situation, Jack Van Zarn raised a hand, ever so politely, to ask, "If a fellow filled himself with hot air, would he go up in the sky?"

"No," was the testy answer.

"But a balloon does," persisted Jack meekly. "If he could swell up enough until his weight added to the weight of the hot air inside of him was less than the weight of the displaced atmosphere, would n't he go up?"

It was apparent that Jack had been attentive; but Sinclair failed to appreciate this. "We will not argue fool questions," said the man, and his discourse commenced afresh.

The class now gave spellbound attention to Mr. Sinclair. Wonderful attention was it; more tense than that ever given a regular teacher. Eager faces peered steadily at the young man, eyes flashed with apparent keen delight, lips were partly open, bodies bent anxiously forward. There were smiles of intelligent understanding, nods of approval to each other, and absolute silence.

When the enthusiastic teacher paused for breath, from twenty-one boys a soft sigh, as of released tension, evidenced appreciation of his efforts.

Mr. Sinclair glanced around uneasily, but continued his lecture. A score of necks craned forward, a score of silly-faced boys sat breathless, fain to catch every single pearl of thought from the lips of Sinclair the wonderful.

"I fill this glass with water," explained the substitute; "I cover the top with a sheet of paper, I quickly invert the glass. See, the water does not fall out. Why?"

No answer was vouchsafed. All waited in drop-jawed awe.

"Because of the pressure of the air," declared the scientist, not quite so confidently, for the attention of the class was uncanny. He commenced to stammer and to flush. Twenty countenances beamed up at him in idiotic rapture. He lost the thread of his remarks and came to a lame halt. To the edges of their seats slid the pupils, inclining their bodies still farther toward the lecturer, faces suffused with the light of imbecile expectancy.

The teacher's unnerved hand placed the tumbler on the desk.

"We — we'll now write about this," said he huskily. "Take your pens."

"Oo!" exclaimed one rascal, "my inkwell is

all full o' paper and chew'n'-goom, teacher." He failed to add that he had filled it himself.

"So's mine," added another, "and a rubber band, too."

Out piped Max Schuler, "Mine's got a blotter in it."

"I got a bit o' chalk," cried Carson; "and a face is on it."

Sinclair's investigation revealed a startling art gallery, the result of Johnnie's personal labors. Mr. Parks, by the constant exercise of an eagle eye, kept his inkwells bright and shiny — alluringly shiny this day. The circular top with the arched hole in one quadrant had suggested many things to Johnnie's fertile imagination. And he had found time, even in the midst of the hazing, to exercise his talent, the boys passing him a fresh inkwell as fast as the previous one was ornamented. On one he had drawn a sign-board:

NO FISHING ALLOUD

A second served notice:

BATHING SUTES — 25 cts A HR.

The substitute passed from desk to desk. In the next design, the hole became a tunnel toward which a train of cars was rushing, a curl of dust from each wheel indicating speed. On Van Zarn's well, the hole was an open mouth. There were two closed eyes, two dots for nostrils, and a fly about

to step into the gap. Carson's well exhibited a caricature of the substitute.

Sinclair stood and looked about savagely. He tried to push into the corner of his mouth enough of his little mustache to chew upon. The boys waited for the sub's next move.

The man spoke bitingly. "What kind of teacher have you had, anyway? The boys of this school have not learned to respect their teachers. You think you can make a monkey out of me. I'm going to make you loafers sweat for this. Class, attention! Stand!"

The order was obeyed with expectant grins. Johnnie did not grin. His mouth drooped.

"Gee! He's a hard nut to crack!" he decided. "If he says another word against Mr. Parks, I'll — I'll —"

"Each boy take his inkwell," ordered Sinclair. "Down you are to go, four flights to the yard, there to clean wells, and come back, all in perfect order. If there is any disorder, you'll make the whole trip over again. Understand?"

"Yes, SIR!" shouted the class delightedly.

Kelly's face lit up with a new idea as downstairs went the boys, Mr. Sinclair at the head.

There was one scholar who did not get all the ink out of his well at the sink in the yard, and that one was Red Kelly. The others did, and most of it was on their hands. The boys were

unusually quiet all the way upstairs, and Mr. Sinclair therefore marched in front with swelling pride, nor deigned even once to turn his head. He looked well satisfied with himself as he entered room 306. But when he turned to face the boys as they came in one by one, he staggered against the blackboard. And there he was propped when the principal followed the end of the line and surveyed what was officially known as class 7 B, now hardly recognizable.

The faces of all the boys, except the first few who had been directly behind teacher on the upward journey, were decorated with ink. There were black noses, whiskers, mustaches, and eyebrows. There were Irish, Indians, Chinamen, Zulus, and a Wild Man of Borneo. There was a tattooed man, and a boy with the spotted fever. Caluchie was a fierce African, and Van Zarn, a full-bearded pirate.

Kelly was the most presentable. He had only a goatee. But that was because of his unselfishness. So busy had he been, putting artistic touches on other faces, that he had had no time to fix his own. And, besides, the ink gave out — so he explained later to his suspicious comrades.

Mr. Sinclair sank weakly into a chair and looked helplessly at the grim-faced principal.

And Mr. Sinclair was not present in the afternoon. Neither were some of the boys. Of a very

enduring quality was that ink; and those who showed up were in various stages of color. They eyed the angelic face of Johnnie Kelly with wrinkled brows.

Mr. Hartley paused at Kelly's desk and looked him squarely in the eyes for some time.

"Why?" demanded the old man imperatively.

Johnnie Kelly fully understood the question. "He was knockin' Mr. Parks," the boy answered truthfully.

And the principal said nothing more, but quietly crumpled up as contraband the paper on which Master Johnnie was working. Perhaps he found time later to study it when the boy was not observing:

IN MEMORY
Of
A BOLD SUB
WHO PERISHED
WHILE BRAVELY THROWING
THE BULL
AT THE BATTLE
Of
SUB'S BLUFF

THIS IS ERECTED
By the
LOFERS OF 7 B

LET HIM
Rest In Piece

CHAPTER XXIII

PRINCIPALLY EPISTOLARY

HAVING obtained Mr. Parks's military address from Mr. Hartley, Johnnie Kelly spent an entire Saturday composing a letter to his hero.

My dear Mr. Parks:

I found your ristwatch on your desk and kept it because it might get swiped and I asked Miss Bouck to take it and send it to you and rite a long letter telling you about it but she says no you found it Johnnie so you send it to Mr. Parks and I says no you send it I can't tie the box up safe nor rite good and she says I'll tie it up and address it for you and put your name in the corner so he'll no it comes from you and she did. But now you no she sent it so you can rite her a letter thanking her and be sure to send her money for the stamps. I uster think anybody what wore a ristwatch was a sissy but now I no hes the real cheese.

The first day you was away we had a man substeetoot and he was *some* bush-leeger. The boob threw a wild one about you being a bum teacher, and we knocked him all over the lot everybody got a hit and Mr. Hartley had to take him outer the box and its back to the bushes for him the poor fish. Mr. Hartley did n't do a thing to us but next day he come in and begin to talk and bymby I felt so mean and loafery I wanted to crawl under the radiator. He said we should oughter be the proudest boys and girls in the school on account of you, and we oughter be an egg-sample

of patriotism to the whole neighborhood we should hold are heads up and work every hour and every minute for the U.S.A. And when a sub comes in we should think why that sub is there and no matter what that sub does and no matter what happens we should remember are captain fighting for us and act like are captain would be proud of us and Mr. Parks you can bet your last shirt thats what we are going to do. I'm going to be so careful I'm afraid I'll get sick off it. And we're all getting a move on working for Red Cross and comfort kits and Liberty Bonds. Mr. Schuler is going to give a watch to the one that sells most Liberty Bonds but there aint a chance for me I don't no nobody that can buy much and I sweat myself to a greese spot and sell maybe a hundred dollars worth a day and Max brags how his fathers going to buy a wopping pile the last minute and swamp us all and Max ull get the watch. I'm knitting a scarf like the rest of the girls and I'll soke the kid that laughs at me only the needles is fierce! And you know how Izzy Cohen is so poor its on account of the war and we're going to take care of him and his mother out of are war funds like Mr. Schuler says. Mr. Gilfillan dont want us to do that and he hasnt give the school nothing for Red Cross or Liberty Bonds or War Work and I think he's a stingy old miser and not like Miss Bouck hes her uncle but shes a peach aint she but she dont look well now I wonder why.

I no about monk now he lives in a big place and dont do nothing but pray with a wall around it with a lot of other ~~monkers monkeys~~ fellers thats got to be said *monk* to, and of cause there cant be no femimine monk becaus they don't let women in a ~~monkhouse~~ monkery wich is just like this school is getting to be with you going away only its different, soon there will be nothing but skirts and there all

sour only Miss Bouck and she oughter get married soon like all the good lookers dose then the poor kids ull have to look at sum face like a dry prune all day long aint it feirce

and Oblidge

your Friend

Johnnie Kelly

P.S. Sum day I am going to ask Mr. Gilfillan whose greater than Buffalo Bill and I bet he was just hotairing. I dont like him if he has got red hair like me.

When the principal himself came into the room to deliver the letter that came from Mr. Parks to Johnnie, the captain of War Work fell over his own feet in his eagerness to get it. And when Mr. Hartley with a smile suggested that Johnnie might go into the hall to read it, the boy made a precipitate dive.

He tore open the letter and skimmed over it rapidly.

“Not a word about her!” he grumbled. “Now, what do you know about that?”

As he was alone in the corridor, he received no answer. At the end of the hall Johnnie sat on the stairs and read the letter carefully.

“Gee! he’s wrote it for the crowd and it’s a pippin, just the same! Wait till the gang hears this.”

Mr. Hartley let the class leader read it to the “gang”; and when the principal left the room,

no more thrilled, determined, proud set of boys and girls could have been found between Maine and Mexico.

After waiting two days, Johnnie asked Miss Bouck, point-blank, whether Mr. Parks had sent the postage.

“Certainly not, Johnnie,” she laughed; “that would be very impolite.”

Johnnie had his own ideas, however. He sat up far into the night penning his reply:

Dear Mr. Parks:

You forgot the postage.

Ive give up the scarf I couldnt knit for sour apples it looked crazy. Liberty Bonds sells slow. Everybody says Max is sure to cop the watch and he walks around like his father with his stomach stuck out so I'd like to punch it.

Its awful hard for us fellers to be good but me and Jack is a vigilance comite and any feller that even sniffs in school we lay for him and he dont sniff no more believe me. And any girl that wispers and giggles we tell the girls not to talk to her no place and they dont. But the sub we got now is bran new and she cant make work enough for us when we go to her room so sometimes I try to go to sleep and once I done it and snored and the fellers all said I had to go apologize to her and I done it and she said I was a gentleman but shes a lemon, I'm sorry to say so but one music period she give us grammar insted to keep us busy and I got this sentence — He dont no no better — and I says he dosent no *any* better wich is rite because I had it there on a peace of payper under the desk but I could n't think the reason only

to somthings togeather make it something wich it should
 not be and she marked me wrong its a skin
 and Oblidge

your Freind

Johnnie Kelly

P.S. Miss Bouck dont act half so gay as she used to.

Johnnie wrote something on a separate sheet
 and inclosed it:

Mr. Daniel Parks

To Miss Helen Bouck, Dr.

Stamps on ristwatch

14 cents

Received payment,

.....

not yet.

CHAPTER XXIV

ALLIES

THE reply to Johnnie's letter contained a short, kindly explanation of why it would be improper to pay that little bill, and Johnnie found himself blocked in the scheme to reopen direct communication between his two friends.

"It's old Gilvillain!" he growled to himself one afternoon as he and Geo'gia sat in the principal's anteroom. "He's put the kee-bosh on them two, sure; and he's gotter be reformed — that's all there is to it — and he's some old buzzard to reform!"

"Talking to yourself, Johnnie?" asked Geo'gia, who sat across the room. "We were n't sent for because we were bad," she laughed. "Mr. Hartley wants us to take some packages to Isidore Cohen's house."

"I was n't stewartin' over what I'm here for," responded Johnnie, "I was thinkin' of Mr. Parks."

"Is n't that odd? Ah was just thinking of Miss Bouck."

"She ain't gettin' thin, like you said she would," observed Johnnie. "She's just as healthy —"

"But she's quiet as a mouse," whispered Geo'gia. She crossed the room and took a seat beside him. "And it's all on account of the gossip."

"Gossip?"

"Yes. It's all over the neighborhood how Miss Primton and Miss Clack saw her and Mr. Parks in his room late one day in the dark close together."

"It's a lie!" blurted out Johnnie. "They was n't any closer than you and me now."

"How do you know?"

"I jist know — that's all. And if they were, whose business is it? Only old cats like Sally Primton would say different."

"It's just some folks that like to talk, Johnnie — they make the trouble. They say when those two came out through the committee meeting, her uncle was mad —"

"You bet! he was fit to be tied."

"That's so!" Geo'gia exclaimed, "you were there, too, and came out after them. Where had you been all the time?"

"Miss Primton kept me in."

Geo'gia was too bubbling over with one line of thought to follow up this answer critically, and Johnnie breathed easier as she rattled along.

"Well, they say her uncle has forbidden her to have anything to do with Mr. Parks, and —"

"I don't believe that, neither. She could do as she pleases if she —" Johnnie stopped. He wanted to tell Geo'gia something, but he did not want to tell too much.

"She has n't acted the same since," Geo'gia continued. "She has n't had company, nor been visiting; and she just looks at everybody as if she wondered whether they knew her disgrace."

"Gee!" observed Johnnie; "pinch yourself, kid, you've got 'em again."

Geo'gia could not help laughing. "Well, perhaps Ah am dreaming just a tiny bit; but Ah'm 'sure she is n't happy."

"I guess you've said a mouthful," agreed the boy. "Say, if you can keep a secret, maybe you kin help me about them two."

"Yes, yes! Goody, goody! What is it?"

"Guess I won't tell. You're too anxious. A girl can't keep a secret."

"If it's about Mr. Parks and Miss Bouck, Ah'd never peep a word," she promised solemnly.

To the wide-eyed Southern maid Johnnie related the agreement which bound Helen Bouck.

"How do you know this?" she asked.

"You gotter take my word for it. If Sally Primton stood over me and said she'd keep me in every afternoon for life if I did n't tell how I know, I would n't tell. Now do you believe me?"

"Y-y-yes — only Ah 'm curious to know," she admitted wistfully; but Johnnie was adamant.

He told of his correspondence with Mr. Parks. "I thought maybe I could get them to writin' to each other, but it did n't work. Maybe you could talk to her, Geo'gia."

The girl shook her head. "She would n't break her word. We've got to get her uncle to give her back her promise."

"Now you're talkin'. That's the same station I got off at. But I've knocked me head and it's holler."

"What?" Geo'gia's brow wrinkled; then it cleared. "Oh, Ah see. Let's both think hard and we'll be sure to find the way."

When Mr. Hartley came out of his office to summon his two messengers, they were sitting side by side, serious-faced and silent. They were thinking hard.

The pair walked down the front stairs together, Johnnie loaded with bundles, Geo'gia with a single package conceded to her by way of compromise.

"Guess I'm gittin' dopey," said Johnnie. "I can't think of a thing to do to him — 'cept hangin', and that's too good."

"There's something, there's something," repeated Geo'gia. "There *must* be something, and we've got to think of it."

"Say, you know the pitcher hangin' up in front of our room of the feller and his horse with the tin pants?"

"Horse with the tin —? Oh, you mean Sir Galahad."

"Yare. If Dan Parks had that feller's style, he'd come tearin' along and snake her up and run off with her before she could squawk. But, of course, them days 'll never come again." He sighed sadly.

"Silly!" pronounced Geo'gia. "Think of something real."

"I'm tryin' to; but there's bubbles in me think-tank."

They had reached the front door.

"You go first," suggested Johnnie; "I'll come along about a block behind."

"Why, we can go together, can't we?"

"You got another guess comin'," said Johnnie decidedly; "you don't ketch me walkin' in the street with a girl and a bundle — no-siree!"

"You've walked with me before," said Geo'gia indignantly; "the day of the picnic."

"That was different," replied Johnnie doggedly; and as nothing could make him change his decision, the girl walked out with a toss of her head.

She waited for him, however, at the corner of Cohen's street. He passed her without batting

an eyelash, and she followed him with humility a dozen paces behind.

Halfway down the block, Johnnie stopped short, his eyes glued to something ahead, and as Geo'gia caught up to him he shoved her toward the stoop line.

"Pipe the high hat jist turnin' in there!" he cried in an undertone.

"Where?"

"There." He nodded ahead, too loaded with bundles to be able to point.

"Why, it's Mr. Gilfillan himself!"

"Sure! What's he snoopin' around here for? — One, two, three, four" — Johnnie counted the houses — "that's the flat where the Cohens live." He was excited now. "He's gone in."

"That's nothing," said Geo'gia. "There are many other people in that flat beside the Cohens."

"Oh, Boy!" exclaimed Johnnie, an expectant grin spreading over his features. "Here! You watch this stuff. I'm goin' to be a detectif."

Before Geo'gia could protest, he dropped his bundles at her feet and bolted.

He approached the entrance of the flat warily until he assured himself that his quarry was out of the way. In the vestibule he pushed the electric bell-button of a first-floor apartment; and when in response the automatic door-catch was

released, he scooted into the gloomy hallway and up two flights before the party whose bell he had rung could reach the door.

On the floor above a door closed. No one came down. There must be Gilfillan's rendezvous. Johnnie tiptoed up and found a hiding-place in a nook adjoining the dumb-waiter shaft common to all parties on the floor. Here in the dark he waited what seemed an interminable time. Some one came up the stairs and Johnnie had to find some pretense for being where he was. He opened the door of the shaft and pulled the dumb-waiter down. Another tenant came along; whereupon Johnnie pulled the dumb-waiter up.

Perhaps just to make trouble for Johnnie Kelly, detective, fully a dozen people came in and out while Johnnie stood there; and he pulled that dumb-waiter up and down till his arms ached.

To his nostrils came the smells of evening with meals in preparation, variegated and strong odors, some too familiar, some that he had never known before and hoped never to meet again.

"Gee whiz!" was his comment. "Regular gas attackt!"

He still waited. Nothing happened; and he began to wonder why he was there. What good would his sleuthing do to his estranged friends? He had just decided to give it up as a useless

enterprise and had started for the head of the descending stairs, when a door opened behind him. He faced about in time to see a familiar red head disappear hastily and the door close.

"The old boy himself!" he whispered excitedly. "This is interestin'. He knew me, all right. Wonder what he's a-scared of." The boy tiptoed to the door to see the name-card. "Aha! Cohen! The plot is gettin' thick!"

To the floor above skipped Johnnie and lay down at the top to watch developments. There was another tedious wait.

At length that same door opened cautiously and out poked the head of Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan. Peering about and seeing the coast clear, the man put on his high hat and started for the stairs with an air of innocent dignity.

Johnnie made a quick decision. "For some reason he don't want any one to know he comes here to see the Cohens. If he thinks I've got somethin' on him, maybe —" The suggestion was sufficient. Johnnie leaped to his feet and shot down the steps, three at a jump. "I'll jist say, 'Hello, how's the Cohens to-day?' — or somethin' like that — it'll worry him a bit, I bet!"

The stairs were smooth and shiny and badly lighted. The boy slipped and bumped noisily down half a dozen steps.

“Gee horsephat!” The exclamation came out loud enough to be heard from cellar to roof.

Up he jumped unhurt. Rapidly descending footsteps below convinced him that Mr. Gilfillan had recognized the voice of Kelly. The man was probably traveling as rapidly as he could without throwing all dignity to the winds.

Though the semi-darkness contributed a large share, perhaps it was the man’s inability to unbend that aided in his undoing.

As Johnnie reached the head of the lowest flight, Mr. Gilfillan, halfway down the stairs, slipped, fell to one side, and rolled to the bottom.

In an instant Johnnie was beside him, as the man tried to raise himself. His right leg lay doubled under him. With the assistance of a woman who had entered the front door, Johnnie tried to lift Mr. Gilfillan to a more comfortable posture.

“Easy, b’y,” warned Gilfillan. “It’s my leg. I hur-rd it snap.”

“What’ll we do?” asked Johnnie.

“An ambulance, b’y; an ambulance.” Gilfillan was not in the least excited now. “And, my good woman, if ye’ll kindly for to get the leg out straight from under me, I’ll try for to gr-rit my teeth.”

Johnnie rushed for the street. Never in his life

before had he raced *toward* a policeman, even his own father.

“Gilfillan’s half kilt!” he shouted as he passed the open-mouthed Geo’gia, grown weary by long waiting; and she, deserting the bundles, ran toward the gathering crowd.

There followed an exciting half-hour in that street. The ambulance came clanging up, and the policeman made a path for the white-clad young doctor through the crowd of children and grown-ups, and Johnnie’s cup of joy was almost full. Never before had he been allowed so close when the man of druggy smells and bandages bent over a victim. True, it would have been heavenly had the subject been more smashed up and bloody; yet one cannot expect too much pleasure all at once.

When the policeman questioned Johnnie and wrote down the boy’s statement — which made no mention of the scene on the upper floor — the boy had to pinch himself to make sure it was all really true.

And when Mr. Gilfillan wheedled permission from the important young doctor to give Master Johnnie a message for Miss Bouck, the red-headed hero could feel the envious glances of the small-fry.

“It’s Johnnie Kelly — Johnnie Kelly — Johnnie Kelly!” he heard the admiring whispers.

As the ambulance drove off with the patient, Johnnie found himself the center of a densely packed mass not only of children, but of grown folks. To all inquiries he had but one laconic answer: "He fell on the stairs, and I found him at the bottom."

Poor Geo'gia, tears of worry and fright in her eyes, got no nearer than the outskirts of the crowd. Even when the hero started his nonchalant saunter toward the corner, hands in pockets, cap tilted to one side, he was so ringed about by gaping admirers that the anxious girl could not get within ten feet of him. Several times she called to him before he condescended to look in her direction.

"The bundles!" she cried.

Johnnie was not pleased. If he had been ashamed to be seen tagging along the street with a girl before, how much more was it impossible to associate with her now? It would be too, too humiliating — an anti-climax that he had not the courage to face. So he pretended not to understand her, consoling himself with the thought that it was now his duty to carry Mr. Gilfillan's message to Helen Bouck.

Perhaps it was well that he did not see the face of his feminine ally as with a catch in her throat she dropped back from the crowd and stood looking after her departing comrade. Her

lips quivered; and the expression in her blinking eyes might have taken the heart out of his pleasure.

Slowly she went back and stood by the pile of bundles intended for the Cohens; while Johnnie Kelly, with the strut of a conqueror, turned the corner and continued his triumphal march.

CHAPTER XXV

BREAKING THE NEWS

To rid himself of his admirers, Johnnie walked into a corner beer-saloon by the ornate front way and right out the family entrance. Then and only then did he cast aside his dignity and take to his heels. He ran every step of the way to the Gilfillan residence, a private house in a side street, and was so fagged out that he could hardly drag himself up the stone stoop.

The door was opened by a motherly old lady in gingham, who smiled encouragingly as Johnnie struggled to get his breath.

"Mrs. — Gil — Fillum" was as far as he got.

"There is no Mrs. Gilfillan," said the woman, not unkindly, "and Mr. Gilfillan is not in. I am his housekeeper."

"Tell — Miss — Bouck — Mr. John Kelly — is here — to call on her," he managed to jerk out, trying to hide traces of excitement in his voice and manner.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Kelly?" She spoke as though she recognized the name. Miss Bouck must have spoken of Johnnie in that household. "Take a seat in the reception room, Mr. Kelly. I'll call Miss Bouck."

She held the portières aside to the right of the entrance hall, and Johnnie, seeking a chair, dropped into it wearily as the woman went upstairs. He looked around curiously. So this was Gilfillan's house, Miss Bouck's city home to which she was bound for five years?

"This lays all over the Van Zarn coop. The old rip must be soaked in money — and he makes *her* teach school!"

A step on the stairs warned him of Helen's approach, and he arose.

"Well, Johnnie!" was her cheery greeting as she held out her hand, seized his diffidently extended paw, and gave it a hearty squeeze; "take a seat — any one. I like this one over by the window. I can see a visitor's face clearly from here."

"T'anks," said he, seating himself and twirling his cap on the end of his finger to show self-possession. This striking him as impolite, he twisted it into a roll and jammed it into his pocket. "I t'ought I'd call on you to tell you somethin'."

"That was good of you; go ahead."

She seemed so very happy that Johnnie lost heart. "Some things come out awful funny, don't they?" he ventured.

"So it seems," she answered, an amused twinkle in her eyes.

"And some things is bad and they might be worse."

"Some things are better left as they are, Johnnie," said the little teacher. Her amusement vanished. She looked at Johnnie suspiciously.

"But I got a message what I was told to be sure to give you."

Helen leaned forward to put a restraining hand on the boy's knee. "Listen, Johnnie," said she soberly; "you are a dear, good-hearted boy, and you do not mean to do anything wrong, so I will not scold you; but you must never, never bring me any messages. No grown person would do it because for them it would be insulting. I know you do not mean to do anything like that, but —"

Johnnie got to his feet. "But he told me —"

"I don't care what he told you," she interrupted decisively.

"But he's hurt! he's in the hospital!" blurted out Johnnie indignantly.

The color left her face and she clutched the boy's arm. "Is — is he badly hurt?" she demanded huskily.

"Leg broken, anyway. I don't know about his insides; but he says those is O.K."

She dropped Johnnie's arm and was silent for a moment, trembling but calm of face. "Well," she said at length, "I'll — I'll hear his message."

"He says not to worry about him; he's all right

but his leg. Come and see him visiting hours tomorrow and bring him a clean collar and a shirt."

"What?" Miss Bouck's face showed that she had received a shock. "Where is he?"

"Right around here in the hospital."

"Then he had to be sent down from Plattsburg?"

"Gee whiz!" said Johnnie, "it's your uncle!"

Helen Bouck collapsed into a chair, her cheeks aflame. She laughed and she cried; and, recovering control of herself, she called Johnnie a dear young fraud, and the next thing he knew she had escorted him to the door and he was on the sidewalk with pleasant recollections of sundry pats on the back.

CHAPTER XXVI

CHEW UPON THIS

"Till then, my noble friend, chew, upon this."

Julius Cæsar, Act I, Scene 2.

SCENE, Miss Primton's room. Time, the next afternoon.

Rap, rap! went Sally Primton's ruler on the edge of the desk.

"Kelly, chew faster! Take ten minutes more for soldiering."

The teacher tipped her sharp nose ceilingward to view through her rimmed spectacles the half-dozen boys lined up stiffly along the blank wall in back of the classroom like spies awaiting the firing-squad.

"Aw, please, Miss Primton!" begged Johnnie Kelly; "it's most four o'clock a'ready and ter-morrer's the las' day to sell Liberty Bonds for the watch."

"*You* win the prize? — *You?*" There was a tone of sarcasm in her voice, which she doubtless regretted the minute she realized its impropriety. "You should have thought of that, young man, before you chewed gum in my classroom. I'll break all of you of that disgusting habit if it costs me five dollars. Chew ten minutes longer, Kelly, for stopping to talk."

As her eyes raked the line like a machine-gun, each pair of jaws in turn wagged with increased energy. Johnnie chewed on sullenly. It had been an unsatisfactory, blue day. He would like to have learned from Geo'gia what had become of the bundles; but she was absent, and so was Isidore Cohen.

"Caluchie, step away from the wall. It does n't need to be held up. Van Zarn, your mouth is not half full enough. Here, take another two cents' worth."

With a groan the Congressman's son slouched forward to the teacher's desk. He was brought up sharply by the slap of the ruler.

"I don't like your walk!" snapped the teacher. "Go back, sir, and come down that aisle properly. You may chew ten minutes longer for your disorder."

On Jack's second attempt he overdid the part. It was an imperious thwack of the ruler that halted him again.

"Gross disobedience of orders!" clicked Miss Primton. "Malicious impertinence in your manner! Do it again and stay another ten minutes!"

Thus it was that Jack Van Zarn and Johnnie Kelly left the school together, the last of the prisoners.

Johnnie was boiling over.

"Says she, '*You* win the prize? — *You*?' Was n't that an awful knock? I'd like to sell a million dollars' wort' and make her feel dirt cheap."

"She's got my nanny, all right," declared the Congressman's son, following Johnnie's example in resentfully plastering a piece of chewing-gum on the plate-glass of the front door under the legend, "P. S. 199, MANHATTAN."

"Mine, too," admitted Johnnie. "If I was standin' on the end of a dock and seen her comin' toward me, I'd jump off if I had to swim to China."

"Say" — Jack was contemplating the two wads of gum on the door — "your gum ain't half as big as mine."

"You ain't wise," chuckled Johnnie. "I made faces like I had a fistful inside. I got fi' cents' wort' saved. — See?"

He exhibited his treasure.

"Wha — a — at! She started us on five and afterwards gave us two more."

"Yeh, but I begun on one and raised it only one."

"And I nearly broke my jaws on nine cents' worth!" complained Jack.

"Don't worry; she made me work jist as hard chawin' me little two cents' wort'."

As Jack thought it over, he was as tickled at

the subterfuge as if he had played the trick himself, for was it not "putting one over" on their arch-enemy?

"Say," said Jack as they started down the street, "d'yer see the Liberty Bond prize? It just came to-day and Mr. Hartley's had it put in the window of the jewelry store over on Broadway. Come on and see it."

Johnnie was not enthusiastic.

"I don't want no old watch," he sneered.

"Why, you told Sally —"

"Yeh; that's because I wanted to git out. Now, if it'd been a rifle, I'd 'a' tried harder. How much have you sold?"

"Five thousand five hundred dollars," answered Jack proudly.

"Five — thou —! Say it again an' say it slow."

Jack complied.

"How djer do it?"

"My father's friends."

"Humph!" Johnnie's grunt was respectful and thoughtful. "We ain't got no friends like that. I sold 'leven hun'erd dollars an' sweat a barrellful doin' it. But Max has got it cinched."

"Guess he has," admitted Jack. "Nobody's anywheres near him and we've all given up. His father bought ten thousand dollars' worth." Then he added as a word of friendly encouragement,

“But go ahead, Johnnie, to-morrow’s Friday and the signed blanks all don’t have to be in school until Monday noon. All mine are in. I’m going out of town to visit my grandfather — be back for school Tuesday morning. Go ahead, Johnnie, work the flats. Maybe it’ll be just your luck to strike a softy who’ll pan out big.”

“Don’t want the old watch,” repeated Johnnie. He indicated with a repelling gesture the five-story apartment houses in the side street along which they were walking. “’T ain’t wort’ the trouble o’ climbin’ them walk-ups, an’ bein’ bawled out and chased down again. Them kind don’t want bonds; they’re lookin’ fer flour and sugar.”

A score or more of youngsters were congregated before the magnetic show-window; but Jack and Johnnie, taller and huskier than most of the crowd, elbowed their way to the front. There in a beautiful blue plush box lay the prize watch.

“Gee whiz!” exclaimed the startled Johnnie, “it’s a *wrist*-watch. Mr. Schuler did n’t say it was goin’ to be a *wrist*-watch!”

“Yep,” said Jack, “just the kind the officers wear in the trenches.”

“Gee whiz! wisht I’d knowed it was a *wrist*-watch, I’d ’a’ tried harder. — ‘Ill — Ill — um — ee — nated dial’ — What’s that?”

"It's shiny at night so's an officer can see the time in the dark."

"Gee whiz!" repeated Johnnie, putting into the words all the feeling of regret that welled up in his heart. "A real officer's wrist-watch — It's a beaut! And to think Max has got it."

There was a tremor in his voice.

"He ain't got it yet," Jack reminded. "Go ahead and try to beat him. I'm out of it. I'm going out of town to-night. But I don't need it. My father can buy me one if I want it."

The tones of boyish boasting in his speech bothered neither of the friends. Johnnie stood hypnotized by the splendid exhibit, mouth open, his eyes shining big in his freckled face.

"S'long," said Jack; "got to catch a train after supper. See you Tuesday. Beat him if you can — S'long." And he squirmed out of the press of small fry.

Johnnie remained staring.

Sadly, rapturously, he was still studying every detail of strap and time-piece when the last of the crowd melted away. The magnificent thing he imagined on his own wrist. He held up his arm and peered seriously at the spot where the face ought to be.

"Steady, men!" he mumbled to imaginary heroes about him; "five minutes more and we go over the top and give 'em Hell!"

Later with a final look he tore himself away.

"No use," he gulped, and dragged himself home as if his shoes were weighted with the days he had wasted.

In thoughtful silence he ate his supper, making but half-hearted retorts to his mother's good-natured yet anxious raillery. He did not eat rapidly, for his jaws still ached from his hour and a half of strenuous gum-chewing.

"All right, me darlint," said his mother at length, "I suppose ye are worryin' over your school lessons — that's a good b'y."

"I guess I'll be goin' out again to-night to sell Liberty Bonds," said Johnnie with sudden resolution.

"Oh, so that's the cinder in your eye!" sighed his mother with relief. "Go ahead, and God be wid ye!"

"There's no money in walk-ups," was the axiom upon which the lanky bond-salesman planned his campaign. He searched until through the heavy plate glass of filigreed iron doors he caught sight of a pair of imitation palms in white iron urns. "ROSEVALE" was the imposing legend over the door. "Primton lives there," he told himself, "but you bet I'll shy from her door."

"*Some tombstones!*" he voted the urns. "An' a good name for a cemetery: 'Rosevale' — Dis

is de place. It's only when dey are old enough to be t'inkin' of funerals dat dey have enough money to live in places like dem. Here's hopin' it ain't full o' dead ones!"

Kelly was too wise to walk right in. He doubted his ability to convince the ebony gentleman in uniform comfortably stretched on the settee that the Kelly designs should be furthered. Waiting until the colored boy rose in the elevator, Johnnie dashed in and up the stairs. He hid when the elevator descended, then he climbed to the top of the building. It would be easier to bear disappointment on the way down.

Johnnie chose the end door and rang the bell. It was answered by a prim maid in proper black and white.

"Good evenin', Miss," began the boy urbanely; "is your mother home?"

"Who do you wish to see?" was her frosty demand.

"Anybody that'll buy a bond."

"All articles is ordered by telephone," said the maid stiffly, and she shut the door.

"Snifty!" The boy obtained some satisfaction by sticking out his tongue at the door. "T'inks she's some muggins wid dat tidy stuck on her head!"

He tried a second door.

It shot open and Johnnie found himself staring

at a heavy gold chain decorating a portly waist-band.

"Vell, vat you vant?" grated an irate voice.

Johnnie fell back quickly and took one glance up at the scowling face with every jet-black hair on head, eyebrows, and upper lip bristling like the quills on a porcupine.

"Nun — nothin'," apologized the boy. "I — I — I'm jist lookin' fer the quickest way out."

He dived for the stairway, taking the first downward flight in a single jump. The slam of the ogre's door as Kelly struck the floor below brought relief to the boy's fast-beating heart. He sat down weakly on the lowest step.

The solicitor canvassed four floors, studying each name-plate to make sure that he would not land in Miss Primton's bailiwick, and did not sell a bond. Not once did he get over a doorsill. Some said they had bought all the bonds they could, others politely but firmly got rid of him by various means after he had wasted futile words. Most would not listen.

Once more he sank upon a step. A vision of that wonderful wrist-watch haunted him tantalizingly. To solace himself he drew out a stick of Sally Primton's chewing-gum and put it in his mouth.

"Ain't it fierce?" he asked himself. "If I could only git inside one o' dese cages once, betcher I

could ketch a canary; but it's the gittin' in. — Here goes: Eeny, meeny, miney, mo —”

Pointing in turn to each of the closed doors in the corridor, he stepped resolutely to the one indicated by the last word of the rhyme and pressed the bell-button.

After a pause a feminine voice spoke from inside, “Who is it?” the last word curling up in the air like the turning off of a squeaky water-faucet. Johnnie breathed comfortably, for the inflection convinced him that she was tractable.

“Messenger from der gov'ment,” he answered in as manly a tone as he could muster.

Immediately the door opened.

With his tongue Johnnie pushed the gum to one side of his mouth.

“Madam, is your husband home?” he asked, bowing politely; and before she could answer he continued artfully, “No matter, you will do jist as well. I have me papers provin' my authority to act in dis matter, and I'll show dem to you if we kin find a place where there's more light.”

“Why — oh, yes, er — excuse me — step right in.”

She led him to an artistic band-box reception-room. With doubtful mind, but a bold motion, Johnnie drew from his pocket Mr. Hartley's letter empowering John Kelly to solicit subscriptions to Liberty Bonds.

She took it, and her face lighted up for an instant, then sobered down to a scowl that was too pronounced to be genuine.

Johnnie chewed rapidly, nervously contemplating the two windows, and was relieved to note that outside one of them was a substantial fire-escape. There, in case of necessity, lay a promising possibility.

"I'm very sorry, but —" began his hostess — "er — you see, we have taken all —"

"I know, I know," interrupted Johnnie, "but I ain't here like an ord'nary agent. I'm a special. You see, it's this way" — he leaned toward her confidentially — "ter-morrer's the last day and the gov'ment is scared because there ain't been enough bonds sold. You've read that in the papers. And you know how the Joimans will be tickled to pieces if dis fails. So now I'm goin' around to all families what has already took bonds. We know dat *you* are the ones what don't want to see dis gov'ment licked. The gov'ment knows youse've done an awful lot, but when the slackers don't buy enough, we gotter ast you to give more. Now, if your husband —"

"That's enough," interrupted the lady with an amused smile.

She reached for one of the blanks in Johnnie's hand.

"You certainly deserve credit, young man,"

she declared. "You are a clever little rascal, and I'm going to help you along." She took the pen from his hand and filled out the paper. "There, I've signed for five hundred. I admire your — er — freshness."

"I did n't mean to git fresh."

"I mean your manner is *so* refreshing. If my husband were home, he might — er —" She rubbed her chin thoughtfully. "I think even my sister — Just wait a few minutes until she comes in. I expect her every minute. She is a school-teacher. — Here she is, now."

Johnnie stiffened as a key turned in the lock at the end of the hallway. Dubiously he watched the door open.

"Come in here, Sally," called the hostess; "I have a visitor I want you to meet."

There was enough light from the globe above the new arrival's head for Johnnie to recognize her. In the shock he swallowed his gum. It was Sally Primton.

They say that in the trenches a man under fire for the first time is sometimes seized with an uncontrollable desire to run away. Just such a panic swept Johnnie. As his hostess passed down the hall to meet the one and only Sally, the boy stuffed his papers into his hip-pocket, threw open the window, leaped upon the fire-escape, and scurried down.

He found the bottom ladder drawn up. Without a moment's hesitation he hung off the end of it and, dropping to the grass-plot below, scampered around the corner. Nor did he stop running until he had turned into the next avenue. Gone was the enthusiasm of the bond-salesman.

"Who wants an old wrist-watch, anyway?" he asked himself disgustedly, and he went home.

The next day was Friday, usually the most welcome school-day of the week because it is the last; but Johnnie entered the school-building with no cheerful countenance. Miss Primton must now know who was her vanishing visitor, for her sister had seen Johnnie's letter of authorization to sell Liberty Bonds. What horrible punishment would she mete out?

But there was another side to his flight, a side more galling than any fear of punishment. He, Johnnie Kelly, had again, as in the encounter with Slugger Sam, failed to stand his ground at a crucial moment.

"I'm a coward, that's what," he confessed to himself with deep humiliation. "Here goes to make it up."

Before the classes came up from the yards, he entered Miss Primton's room and approached her desk. Miss Primton turned upon him a cold eye.

“Well?” she demanded.

The hostility of her tone would ordinarily have squelched him, but he was determined.

“I showed yellow last night,” he declared, his tone respectful but unflinching.

“Explain.”

“I did n’t know I was in your flat, because I did n’t know you lived with your married sister and your name was n’t on the bell-plate, or else I would n’t ’a’ gone anywheres near your place.”

Too in earnest was he to note the change in Miss Primton’s countenance. Her face flushed, and the severe look in her eyes began to give way to another emotion.

“Why not?” she asked.

“Because — because you’ve got me buffaloed,” blurted out Johnnie. “When I seen you come in, my legs jist would n’t stay there — that’s all — and I beat it. I’m awful sorry. I don’t want to run a —”

Johnnie’s voice trailed off. Miss Sally Primton had stretched out her hand and placed it on his.

“I know you don’t like me, Johnnie,” said she, and her voice had lost much of its harshness; “very few boys do, but I am trying my best to do my duty toward you all. Rigid discipline is what is needed by the boys of to-day to make them efficient men. Parents are very slack. I should fail in my duty if I did not hold you right

up to the mark. The day will come when you will thank me for being strict. But just to show you that I do not bear any ill-will toward you — just to prove that I am human sometimes — let me have one of your bond blanks.”

She could have knocked the boy over with a feather. He fumbled at his rear pocket, drew out his papers, and held them toward her, scarcely believing she was in earnest. And when Miss Sally Primton signed an order for a five-hundred-dollar bond, Johnnie thanked her with difficulty.

“But remember,” was her parting shot as he reached the classroom door, and the tone made him wince, “no nonsense in my room, young man!”

Johnnie stopped in the hall to wipe imaginary perspiration from his forehead.

“Gee!” he told himself; “for a minute I t’ought she was goin’ nutty; but that last sounded good and natural.”

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEN RED HEADS MEET

WHEN Johnnie came from Miss Primton's room, Miss Bouck stopped him to give the message that Mr. Gilfillan wished him to call at the hospital after school; and she furnished him with a pass. Lessons had no interest the rest of the day; not that he cared a particle for Mr. Gilfillan, because he did not; but that for once in his life he believed he was in demand for something beside punishment.

"Guess I got him where I want him," Johnnie gloated privately. "I don't know where I've got him, but I know what he's gotter do to make me do what he wants me to do — whatever that is." Which was rather cryptical, but expressive of Johnnie's determination.

Geo'gia was in school. She deliberately snubbed him; as he had, however, no eyes, no ears, no thought for the Southern maid, he was unaware of this humiliation, and his hours of joy were not spoiled by it.

It was one of those days when the schedule of class 7 B carried it to six different teachers for seven different subjects. It began with spelling at 9.15, immediately after morning assembly, and

concluded in the last forty minutes before three o'clock, with "Organized Recreation," better known to Johnnie as "Organized Rough-House." Yet so absorbed was the boy in thoughts anticipatory of the coming interview, that he forgot to do a single mischievous trick. Even the golden opportunity of that last period was lost completely. And six teachers in 199 that day had at least one uneasy period. There sat Johnnie Kelly with a far-away look in his eyes and a Cheshire-cat grin on his face, and not one of the six could fathom what devilment he was up to. The spelling teacher walked down Kelly's aisle half a dozen times with elaborate purposeless intention, and each time returned to the front, foiled. The history teacher played 'possum for thirty minutes, at her desk, one eye peeled for red-headed ructions, and developed a headache as the only result. Miss Primton made Johnnie stand while she examined him and the seat, the desk, and the floor; and finding nothing, demerited him for "silly smiling." The substitute in Mr. Parks's room became so flushed at Kelly's perpetual grin that she looked herself over in the mirror on the inside of her locker door, and, finding nothing awry, became more confused and wound up with a good cry just as the class passed out.

Not one of the six could find an excuse to detain Johnnie after three. He unburdened himself

before leaving his official classroom by hiding his books in the ventilator outlet. That ventilator was a depraved character, anyway. It had never done an honest day's work in its life. Besides being Johnnie Kelly's accomplice for detaining small boys when teacher was out of the room, it was the secret host of scrap-papers, orange-peels, apple-cores, chewing-gum, pencil-stubs, chalk bits, board-rubbers, buckshot, and other vagabonds. The only way it ever worked was backwards, shooting into the atmosphere of the room microscopic dust that was the particular bane of small boys; not because the dust brought sneezes and bad colds, but because it maliciously covered up the evidence of the last wash and gave a fellow away to a keen-eyed mother. Consequently, the ventilator lost no social standing when it became the repository of the books Johnnie should have carried with him for home study.

Johnnie shot out of the boys' entrance even faster than usual, and made a bee-line for the hospital. The magic pass carried him safely through the outposts and hostile inner lines of hospital attendants to the bedside of Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan. There the red-headed boy faced the red-headed man and each looked curiously at the other.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Gilfillan; how's your insides?" inquired Johnnie politely.

"What? Oh, yes, I'm not injured inter-r-nally, thank you," answered the patient. "Take a seat, b'y."

Johnnie accepted the invitation.

"Johnnie, I wanted for to thank you pusson-ally for what you done for me day before yesterday."

"Forget it," said Johnnie. "Did she bring you a shirt?"

"Yes, yes, thank you; but they won't let me have any of my own clothes. By the way — er — how did you happen to be there?" asked Gilfillan.

"I've got a question I've wanted to ast you for a long time," answered Johnnie. He was determined to allow the enemy to develop the offensive first without revealing his own strength or weakness. "Who is the bug that's got Buffalo Bill beat?"

"Er — what do you mean?"

"You made a speech once about a bird out in California that could put it all over Buffalo Bill."

"Oh, er — yes. I recall now. I had reference to Burrers — John Burrers, the great naturalist."

"Burrers? Never heard of him. How d'yer spell him?"

"B-U-R-R-O-U-G-H-S, Burrers."

"Gee!" said Johnnie, scratching his ear and puzzling over the thing for a moment, "B-U-R-

R-O-U-G-H-S, Burrers! — Ain't the English language crazy? — Guess I'll never learn it."

The man on the bed put his hand alongside his mouth as one who tells a secret. "Me b'y, I'm vurrah much in the same fix!" A deep chuckle accompanied his observation. "Scotland is on my tongue, and the streets of New York on yours. Now that we understand each other, I want to thank you pussonally —"

"Forget it," repeated Johnnie deprecatingly; "I did n't mean to scare you."

"I mean getting the ambulance," explained the man hastily; "and carrying the message to my niece."

"Oh, I t'ought you meant —"

"Yes, yes, I understand. Now that you mention it, I might explain my strange actions so that they will not be misunderstood. I was on an urrand that you have probably found out. Now, I am not anxious for to advertise such things, because in the fur-rst place, I'd surely be pestered to death by — well, Lord knows who; and in the second place, I'm not seeking notoriety in these war-times. I leave all that to our patriotic friend, Mr. Schuler. Now, Johnnie, I trust you will —"

"Schuler's patriotic, all right," Johnnie broke in, "but he ain't playin' fair on the Liberty Bond watch business — Do you think so?"

"What is he doing?"

Johnnie told the story. As he wound up with the tale of his campaign in the Rosevale Apartment, there were signs of appreciation behind him. The white-clad house-surgeon was enjoying the recital. Johnnie looked him over from top to toe.

"Say, Doc," said he at length, "have you bought all the Liberty Bonds you kin hold?"

"Sure thing."

"No, you have n't," declared the boy with sudden vehemence. "Maybe you've taken enough for a plain workin'-man, but you're educated and you oughter be ashamed of yourself. You oughter help us gov'ment people out in this last drive."

" 'Us gov'ment people'!" the doctor chuckled.

"Come on, be a sport. I dare you to."

"You don't expect a house-surgeon to have money, do you?"

"Soft on the poor-guy stuff!" admonished Johnnie with a deprecatory wave of his hand. "I know you, Redginald Fitz-Maurice Vander-Gould, spite o' your barber's disguise."

The doctor looked at his white uniform and laughed outright.

" 'Hah! foiled again!' hissed the villain," he supplied. "What are you anxious to sell bonds for?"

"For me country — and a wrist-watch."

The doctor did not give in easily; but as he had opened himself to attack by his own geniality, he

found his defenses pierced before he could rally. He tried to match his tongue and wit against those of the boy from the street; but he ended by an unconditional surrender, and signed for a hundred-dollar bond. Then, not to be the only victim, he led this machine-gun of a bond-salesman from cellar to roof of the hospital and stood by chuckling while the carrot-headed boy mowed down the dollars.

Johnnie returned to the bedside of Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan to count up his spoils.

"Two t'ousand six hun'erd and fifty," he announced gloomily. "I oughter git more in a orphan-asylum."

"Why are you so anxious to get that prize?" asked Mr. Gilfillan.

"Because it's a wrist-watch, jist like Mr. Parks wears." He saw Mr. Gilfillan's face cloud, and it roused his resentment. "Now, see here, you've got the wrong dope on Mr. Parks, believe me. He's the bulliest feller — Why, say, they don't come no better than what he is."

Johnnie drew his chair closer to the bed, and while Gilfillan studied with amusement the boy's eager face, Master Kelly talked on of the Daniel Parks that the boys and girls knew. He talked and talked and took no heed of time. At length he blurted out with "And that's the feller that you won't —"

"Tut, tut!" warned the man on the bed; "you're treading on vurrah dangerous ground, me b'y, vurrah dangerous ground. Children sometimes are too sophisticated. We'll change the subject."

Johnnie arose in disgust, folded his papers and put them in his pocket. "Guess I'd better slide along. T'ree t'ousand seven hun'erd and fifty dollars! A whole lot if I had it in me fist, but it won't git me a wrist-watch no more 'n if it was a jitney."

"Why have n't you asked *me* to buy bonds?"

Johnnie kicked the bedpost sheepishly. "Won't git mad if I tell you why?"

"No."

"I jist got a hunch, that's all."

"No Johnnie, come on out with it. Give me a good rap."

"Well, you ain't the kind that unloosens. Jest, fer instance, if you was, you would n't be in dis hospital ward with twenty others."

The man guffawed in real earnest, drawing upon himself a merited rebuke from the nurse.

"Anything else, Johnnie?"

"Yes, sir. You want me to put it straight, don't you?"

"I've brought it on my own head. Yes, go ahead."

"Well, I would n't let nobody buy U.S. Liberty

Bonds and pretend to be a patriot when he don't back up the army."

"What?" said Gilfillan, puzzled; "I don't back up the army? What do you mean?"

"Mr. Parks —"

"Get out of here!" ordered Gilfillan, more than half in earnest; and Johnnie Kelly with a triumphant grin made his departure.

On Monday the bond-selling campaign closed, and Mr. Hartley was the only one who knew the result. The winner, however, was not to be announced until later. But the matter no longer interested Johnnie.

"What I never had, I have n't lost; so what's the use o' snufflin'?" he observed philosophically.

It was at noon of this day that Geo'gia Carter deliberately waylaid him in the school-yard. A new reason for ignoring the girl from the South had presented itself. The teachers had agreed that she possessed the ability and the energy to complete her elementary-school course in one term instead of two. This Monday morning she had been skipped from class 7 B to 8 A.

To Johnnie this abnormal cleverness was treason. Every one else in the class was prodded by her baneful example into unnatural activity. For three hours this morning, in every one of the

four rooms to which they traveled, class 7 B had had that example of Geo'gia Carter held up before them. No wonder, then, that Johnnie greeted her coldly.

"Ah beg your pardon for annoying you," she began, "but Ah thought it might interest you to know why Mr. Gilfillan was where he was the other day when he got hurt."

"Yare?"

"You've kept out of my way, so Ah could n't tell you before," she continued.

"I ain't noticed you," replied the boy.

"That's what Ah mean. Do you want to hear, or don't you?"

"Sure."

"Well, he took money to them — pretending to lend it — and gave Mrs. Cohen a position as janitor in one of his apartment houses. That's why Isidore has been away ever since. Their new home is in a different school district."

"Wh-a-a-t?" said Johnnie incredulously. "That tight-wad? — I don't believe it."

"Ah took those bundles to Mrs. Cohen when — when you left me, and Mrs. Cohen told me herself. She would n't say a word at first, because he'd made her promise not to; but when Ah told her he had been hurt, she was so excited and so sorry that she let it all out."

"Humph!" grunted Johnnie. "That's what he

meant — if folks knew, he'd be pestered — Humph!"

"What do you think of that?" questioned the girl.

"I'm jist beginnin' to t'ink. Let's t'ink and compare t'inks ter-morrer."

On Tuesday morning before lessons began, it was Johnnie Kelly that sought an interview. He and Geo'gia again met in the yard. The red head and the golden head drew close together in eager conversation; for Johnnie had something to say, and Geo'gia with sparkling eyes and radiant face found it hard to suppress her glee.

"Goody, goody!" she whispered excitedly.

That evening Johnnie posted a letter to Mr. Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan in care of the hospital. And on Wednesday morning new events drove thoughts of it into the background.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FOR PRESIDENT — JOHN KELLY

“ — AND the boy or girl having the greatest number of votes shall be President of the pupils' organization, the Amsterdam Republic.”

It was Wednesday morning; the school principal's words sent through Johnnie Kelly a thrill like the tingling felt on the downward swoop of a long-roped swing.

“Some dinky swell job!” observed the thirteen-year-old boy to himself, and glanced around at the other forty-seven delegates gathered in the front seats of the auditorium. After the meeting four of the forty-seven would be seeking their hats, and three, their books; for carrot-haired Kelly had been up to his usual tricks. Before that time, however, these schoolmates in convention assembled would nominate two boys and two girls to run for the exalted office of President.

“ — The one with the next greatest number shall be Vice-President,” continued Mr. Hartley.

Johnnie wrinkled up his nose.

“Nix on the Vice fer me,” said he.

Kelly's eyes caught the wistful expression of Jack Van Zarn beside him. The son of the Congressman was flushed, his eyes were snapping.

"Finally," announced the principal, "to insure that the boys do not all vote for a boy, and the girls all vote for a girl, it is provided that at the general election two weeks from yesterday, each voter *must* vote for one of the two boys *and* one of the two girls. The most popular boy or girl with both boys and girls will thus be elected President. Now, I declare a recess of five minutes for electioneering."

"You want it, Jack, don't you?" said Johnnie.

"Why — I — I don't know — Don't you want it?"

For an instant, only, did Johnnie hesitate. He wanted it — wanted it with all his heart; but he knew that Jack Van Zarn was by far the more fit and deserving.

"Naw!" sneered the Irish boy; "de salary ain't big enough, and dere ain't no graft. Fellers, we'll nomeenate Jack Van Zarn and we'll put him in, sure!"

The declaration met with enthusiasm from the coterie that had gathered around the pair, but half an hour of voting found them unable to gather enough delegates for Jack. By that time there had been nominated Henry Martin and Edith Hartsdale, both from class 8 A¹ and Georgia Carter, from 8 A², which, translated, means that the three candidates were in grade 8 A, studying the work of the first half of the 8th

whole year, but they were in different classes or sections of the grade, the fact being indicated by the number written as an exponent and read, "Eight-A-one" and "Eight-A-two."

With one vacancy to be filled, Johnnie gained the attention of Mr. Hartley and stepped to the front of the room, as had several speakers before him, to address the convention.

"If a feller has got brains," he orated in some heat, "what is the dif if he comes from the highest class or the lowest? Dere ain't nothin' in the Consteetution of the Yernited States sayin' a feller can't be President if he lives in the Bronx. Youse have got three from what'll be the highest class next term; now give the next highest class a chanst — nomeenate Van Zarn."

Some of the younger element nodded approval. Several sophisticated young gentlemen and misses from the upper classes snickered; and in the five minutes between ballots, there was considerable buzzing and chuckling among the latter as Henry Martin — painfully studious and sedate, in Johnnie's estimation — circulated from group to group with a whispered suggestion.

While the tellers counted the paper ballots, Johnnie busied himself pinning to unsuspecting Geo'gia's back a placard inscribed,

"VOTE FOR ME, OR I'LL CRY."

Half the convention were enjoying this when Mr. Hartley announced the result of the balloting:

"The fourth candidate is John Kelly."

"Jumpin' MIKE!" exploded the red-headed Johnnie, half aloud, crumpling in his seat.

The larger boys set up a noisy hand-clapping and laughed boisterously. Henry Martin sat impassive, which made Johnnie's blood boil.

Unlimbering himself, the lanky Kelly rose and hung loosely over the back of the seat before him.

"I resign!" he managed to choke out.

Jack Van Zarn grabbed Johnnie's coat, yanked him down with more force than politeness, and himself leaped up.

"What did you say, Kelly?" asked Mr. Hartley eagerly.

While Carson held down the struggling Johnnie, Jack Van Zarn did the answering:

"Mr. Kelly says he resigns to his fate. He'll run for President."

The principal eyed Master Jack, a whimsical expression playing over his features, and without further comment, adjourned the convention.

The long-legged candidate passed out of the assembly-room, the center of an admiring group; but once he and Jack had slipped into a quiet corner of the school basement, the Irish boy was in a blue funk.

"Hope to croak if I kin stand it," he groaned.

"It's great; but look a' me! I can't talk like the real cheese. Dat bunch only nomeenated me so as to make fun. I'm goin' to ask the gang to put you in my place."

"Look here," retorted Jack, "you worked honest for me, did n't you? Well, the crowd did n't want me, and you're going to run."

"No, I ain't neither. I seen Hen Martin puttin' up der game. He knows he can beat me easy, because nobody would vote for me against him. Why, he's a real high-toned guy, he is."

"What difference does that make? You're as good as he is."

"But I gotter make a speech ter-morrer from the assembly platform; and he'll put it all over me. I'll git the merry ha-ha!"

"No, you won't. I'm going to be your campaign manager and I'll write your speech and drill you how to say it, too. Now, brace up."

Johnnie sat on a bench for some time, thinking.

"You're right, all right," he declared at length. "I got as much chanst as Abe Lincoln or — or — any other poor slob. I'll do me best. I'd like to make smartie Martin and his gang sick."

The candidate was silent and thoughtful the rest of the morning. He found himself set apart by his companions. He saw his own classmates studying him seriously. As other classes passed in

the hall, their glances spoke of a new respect. It gave him a pleasant thrill.

At noon he marched down the avenue like a conqueror, his admirers following after, or running ahead to turn around and stare at the celebrity. In all his dreams he had never pictured such a wonderful life. Never before had he been so happy — no, not even when he was quarantined with the measles.

He was still in an exhilarated state of mind when he started back after luncheon. Before he got within sight of school, he caught the blare of bugles, the rattle of snare-drums, and the scream of fifes some blocks away. Jack Van Zarn had obtained permission for a committee to absent themselves from lessons during the morning, and this was the result. With unusual diffidence the nominee hid in an areaway and peeped out to see the procession come down the avenue. Just what tune the band intended to play mattered little, for there was plenty of noise. Behind marched the Kelly Faithful, half a hundred boys beneath paper banners proclaiming the candidacy and virtues of one "John Kelly — For President."

Johnnie let the parade get half a block away before he surrendered to an overpowering impulse and dashed excitedly after it.

"Hey, hey!" he shouted. "Wait fer me! Wait fer me!"

From a pile of rubbish awaiting the street-cleaning department's call, he snatched a stick still decorated with shreds of a cord mop, and rushed panting to the head of the line, where he proudly proceeded to swing his improvised baton with all the gusto — if not with the technique — of an expert drum-major.

In vain did Jack Van Zarn remonstrate. Johnnie paid no attention to him; and to avoid a scene, the campaign manager had to retire to second place.

The candidate put new life into the Kelly cohorts. The drummers banged with redoubled efforts, the fifes screamed like lost souls, and the buglers blew until their faces resembled ripe tomatoes.

Policemen indulgently forgot the city ordinances. The Kelly procession wound through the neighborhood, completing the journey in front of the school. Here it was surrounded by a thousand boys and girls from kindergarten to graduating class.

Van Zarn climbed upon the school steps and harangued upon the sterling qualities of Mr. John Kelly.

Johnnie let the campaign manager talk, nor volunteered to put in his own word. He had something else to keep him busy. When after many trials he succeeded in tossing his staff high in air,

catching it again before it reached the ground, and twirling it like a pin-wheel, wild cheers interrupted his red-faced spokesman. And when he did it again, the Kelly drums and bugles and fifes made such a noise that Van Zarn gave up in disgust.

If Johnnie's cup of joy had been full before, it was now running over.

"You've queered yourself, Johnnie," was Jack's angry accusation as they entered the building; "you've done just what Hen Martin thought you would. Did you see him and his crowd taking it all in from across the street?"

During that afternoon Johnnie was obliged to admit to himself that something was wrong. The Martin adherents nudged one another, eyed Kelly, and chuckled. Those in the lower classes who in the morning had viewed him with a kind of reverence, now wore a look expectant of more fun. The girls, on the other hand, tilted their noses in air and looked another way as Kelly's line passed. Kelly was, after all, but very common clay. And upon Henry Martin, painstakingly dignified and serious, was conferred a double share of respect. In fact, it seemed to be the Martin plan of campaign to do very little and let the other fellow defeat himself.

A wrinkled-browed Johnnie left school at three o'clock.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE HEAD THAT WEARS A CROWN

THERE was a busy committee in the top story of the Van Zarn residence when John Kelly appeared by appointment at seven that evening. Upon the floor of the Congressman's billiard-room kneeling printers were getting out in fancy letters on large sheets of oak-tag paper the literature composed by the campaign manager, who, with coat off, was biting his pencil at a desk in the corner.

The candidate posed in the doorway to produce an effect. He was sporting a high collar, bright red tie, and a soft felt hat. His hands were squeezed into a pair of his mother's lisle gloves and he leaned with an air of hauteur upon a heavy blackthorn cane. To escape the tickle of the huge paper chrysanthemum that decorated a large portion of the northeast section of his coat, he held his chin high. Altogether he felt as stiff and important as Dutch Henry, janitor's assistant, taking tickets at the door on graduation day.

With dignified tread he strode in, glancing here and there, and responding to greetings with a sedate bow.

For fully sixty seconds he maintained his dig-

nity; until he had taken in the scope of his comrades' work.

"What cher advertisin'?" he inquired disgustingly; "school lectures?"

"Why, what's the matter?" demanded Jack Van Zarn.

"Matter? Looks like grammar sentences to analyze. Do you t'ink any kid's goin' to read dat junk if dey don't have to? 'T ain't school lessons. Make 'em interestin'. Draw pitchers — funny ones. Put some pep into the stuff! Here, le' me show yer."

The cane was tossed on the billiard-table along with the lisle gloves; off came Johnnie's coat with its monster decoration, and down on all fours went the nominee, brush in hand.

"Ah, come on, Johnnie," coaxed Jack, putting a restraining hand on the artist, "you've got that speech to learn."

"Jest a moment," begged Johnnie. "Here's a beaut of a idea."

He got rid of three more ideas before Jack succeeded in dragging him to a bedroom on the same floor.

"For goodness' sake!" complained the campaign manager; "you've got to act more dignified. Your stunts in the parade were enough to make a fellow cry. Nobody is going to vote for a clown."

Johnnie's face fell.

"It's the ash-can fer me, den."

"Don't you believe it, Johnnie. I've got a speech here for you that will make the Martin gang sick."

"I have a photygraft o' me sayin' it!"

"Hold on. Just read it aloud, and we'll see." The nominee took the paper.

"Feller citizens —"

"Whoa!" said Jack, seizing the manuscript and making a change. "Read it again."

"Citizens of our own Amsterdam Republic. I had no idea of runnin' —"

"Stop! I thought I had all the *i-n-g's* out. — There! Go ahead."

"I had no desire to run for President; but de honor has been forced upon me and I shall do me best —"

"No," interrupted the author, "if you get excited you'll say 'me best,' sure pop. I'll change that. And one more thing: There is n't a 'this' or 'that' in the whole speech; but you've just *got* to learn to say 'the' instead of 'de.' I'm going to pound 'the' into your head if neither of us gets a wink of sleep to-night."

And so was prepared the speech of Mr. John Kelly.

It was a heavy-eyed presidential aspirant that dragged his carefully attired self to school next morning. In response to Van Zarn's appeals,

though with reluctance, he had discarded the gloves, cane, and chrysanthemum; but he wore a clean shirt and his Sunday suit of longies. He lifted his head high and felt his importance as he viewed his own and his comrades' handicraft decorating the walls of the indoor school-yard. In all the colors of school crayons, there were portraits, cartoons, and legends blazoning forth the name and fame of Kelly.

Peeking into the girls' playground, he discovered a twittering bevy fluttering around what he considered his masterpiece: a chorus of figures meant to represent the female voters of the Amsterdam Republic were following a supposedly handsome young man. By means of an arrow and a legend at the bottom, this figure was revealed as John Kelly. From the mouths of the followers, lines led to their concerted speech, printed above:

We'll all vote for our Don John.

Neither Johnnie nor the misses who admired the poster knew what sort of creature was a Don John, but Johnnie had seen the name in a book, badly spelled J-U-A-N, and had gathered enough from the context to decide that a Don John was a sure hit with the ladies; and judging by the attention that the picture was drawing, this particular Don John was no exception.

There was, however, one lady who failed to

appreciate him. Miss Sally Primton, coming into the building *via* the girls' entrance to avoid the extra journey to the front door, stared for one frozen instant at Don John's portrait; in the next, she pushed her way through the startled crowd of little girls and tore the awful thing from the wall.

Instead of being angry, Johnnie chuckled delightedly and went to hunt up Jack.

"What did I tell you?" he observed with a grin. "It's my stuff that's knockin' their eyes out, and old Sally's so jealous she don't know whether she's goin' or comin'."

"The posters are making everybody talk about you," agreed Jack. "Hen Martin is looking worried already. His crowd never thought of posters. Now they're only copy-cats if they put some up. The kids are thinking more about you now than they are of Hen Martin. All right — but you've got to be a fellow that they won't be ashamed of, or they won't vote for you. Everything you do or say must be just like the President of the United States. Just notice how grand Hen Martin walks around."

"Yeh," sneered Johnnie, "like he was balancin' a egg on his head. Just the same, I'll be as stiff as old cheese, too, or bust."

It was a determined Kelly that stepped to the front of the platform that morning to make his

acceptance speech. The other three had preceded him. Mr. Hartley's jaws were set. He seemed braced for a shock. The plotters who had nominated Kelly leaned forward in pleased expectancy. Johnnie surveyed them deliberately, then winked at Van Zarn in a seat near the front.

Jack scowled; the candidate's face sobered. He studied Van Zarn's face for an instant. It flashed upon him that his speech was real, that it out-classed his opponents', and that now was his opportunity to place himself right before his constituents.

A quiver of pleasure passed through him; and slowly, carefully, he began.

For five minutes he spoke, uttering phrases he had never rolled his tongue around before, while half a thousand youngsters hung seriously on his words. He could see the surprise of the teachers along the side aisles as the carefully drilled syllables fell from his lips. The smile on the faces of the Martin followers began to fade. As John Kelly turned to promise the girls as many appointments to office as the boys, he caught out of the corner of his eye the tension of wonder in the face of the old principal on the platform. It was a tribute that even the thirteen-year-old boy could not fail to comprehend. It launched him into his peroration with a heart that bounded with the joy of triumph — he was making good!

"If I am elected President of our glorious Amsterdam Republic, I'll make Congress pass a bill so if every boy and girl promises to work hard in school hours and not be bad any more, the teachers dassent give us any home work, nor keep us in after school, and all will be fine and grand in dear old School One-ninety-nine!"

He sat down amid wild applause, his face one triumphant, freckled smile. This ending was his own idea edited by the faithful Jack, who had protested against it in vain. And its reception by the voters proved that Johnnie had made no mistake.

When the classes began the march back to their room, Miss Primton came flouncing up to the principal, a low-voiced but vehement protest bursting from her thin lips.

"I shall not interfere," was Mr. Hartley's smiling answer. "This is an experiment in pupil politics; and, to tell the truth, it smacks of the real article. I see little difference between promises of full dinner-pails and promises of no home work."

He took Johnnie by the hand as the boy started to leave the platform.

"Johnnie," said he, "I congratulate you. You may not be able to keep all your promises, but your pronunciation has wonderfully improved. Keep it up."

A proud lad was John Kelly as he looked first at Miss Primton, to see how she took it, and then into the man's kindly eyes.

"T'anks. Guess you t'ought I was too tough to ketch on to swell talkin', did n't yer?"

At three o'clock Miss Sally Primton asked him to remain a few minutes.

"Kelly," said the teacher when they were alone, "now that the scholars are looking up to you as a leader, don't you think it well to make extra effort in studies? Take a seat here and I'll give you some extra coaching."

"But —" Johnnie began in alarm.

"You need not thank me, Kelly; I am doing this gladly."

Miss Primton worked the candidate at full speed for an hour and assigned some extra home work.

"Bring it to me after school to-morrow," said she, "and I'll go over all your mistakes with you."

"You need n't work so hard for my sake," said Johnnie.

"It is not for your sake, Kelly. It is for the sake of the school."

At midnight Johnnie threw himself on his bed with a groan.

"Gee whiz! I kin never git all dis truck into me

bean! It ain't no snap, runnin' for President, 'specially when I got a friend like Primton. I just gotter hurry up and git that bill passed or I'll croak!"

There was nothing to it but KELLY the next morning.

True, when the scholars entered the inner yards they found in the few spaces left vacant by the Kelly forces placards announcing that

HENRY MARTIN & EDITH HARTSDALE
ARE SAFE & SANE CANDIDATES

But they were lost in the glare of Kelly enthusiasm. And the more Henry Martin and his friends pooh-poohed the Kelly promises, the more popular those policies became.

A few lonely strips of drawing-paper done in crayon called attention to the fact that a Miss Georgia Carter was also a candidate.

As Johnnie and Jack Van Zarn stood taking these in, a boy from Geo'gia's class addressed Johnnie.

"Say, Geo'gia used to be in your class until she was skipped on Monday. Martin and Hartsdale are running together, suppose you hitch up with Geo'gia and get our forty votes?"

"Nothin' doin'! She's just as much me rival as Martin."

"You've got to vote for a girl, or your vote

won't count, Mr. Hartley says," persisted the ambassador.

"Yes, but I ain't goin' to tell all me friends to vote for her and help her beat me own self."

"Our candidate," put in Van Zarn, "is not taking sides in the contest for the Vice job. You see, if he became president, it might be awkward if the one who became Vice was n't the one he sided with."

And when the Geo'gia Carter spokesman left in a huff, vowing vengeance, Jack took Johnnie to task.

"There you spill over again! You must n't say another word in this campaign. You make awful breaks."

The presidential aspirant made a wry face.

"Say, how about Vice-President? Has he gotter study like a slave and wear a clean shirt and walk around like a Sunday-School superintendent wid a mout'ful o' water?"

"No. Pop says, 'The Vice-President is the fellow who can enjoy all the vices and get paid for it: because one month after election, nobody knows who he is.'"

"I — I kinder t'ink it would n't be so bad —"

Jack grabbed Kelly by the shoulder.

"You don't mean to say you're getting cold feet?"

"Oh, no!" protested Johnnie hastily; but he did not look into Jack's eyes as he said it.

As election day approached, Johnnie found himself a divided personality. Politics was all very fine for John Kelly, candidate for President: he liked basking in the sunlight. But Master Johnnie Kelly, the boy of pranks, had misgivings.

By their attitude toward the candidate, the citizens of the Amsterdam Republic forged the chains that began to fetter him. To them the game of politics was a serious matter; Mr. John Kelly was a celebrity, following in the footsteps of Washington and Lincoln. When he appeared among his constituents, they stood at a respectful distance and studied him with awe. Did he show the slightest sign of relapsing into a spirit of boyish humor, their puzzled eyes brought him up with a round turn. His classroom successes and failures were more to them than their own progress; and day after day Miss Primton with unflagging zeal continued to keep him in after school to teach him. It all had a sobering effect upon the nominee; and as he grew more aloof, serious, and solemn, he could feel in reflex the increasing respect and hero-worship of the Amsterdam Republicans. The victim was reduced to the lowest ebb of enthusiasm.

He left the school-building one afternoon when the shadows of evening were bringing out the street-lights, and bumped into Jack Van Zarn coming out of a moving-picture theater.

"Gee whiz!" exploded the nominee; "ain't I ever goin' to have a chanst again? Say, I've studied till me head feels stretched like a basketball. I must n't talk, and I can't hide a feller's books, or t'row his hat acrost the room, or pull a girl's hair, or chew gum — or nothin'. It's somethin' fierce. I guess I'll die from bein' corked up."

A grin spread over his countenance as he added, "But, gee whiz! would n't dey give me a swell funeral!"

Election day found the Kelly clan wild with assurance of victory, and Kelly himself feeling like a criminal about to be sentenced. He deposited his own ballot, then tried to slip away into a corner. Admiring followers, however, surrounded him, the more familiar proudly talking while their stern-faced leader said nothing, the smaller fry staring at him in open-mouthed awe.

As Johnnie stood moodily inattentive to the chatter of this coterie, he overheard a youngster behind him inquire of another, "I'm going to vote for Kelly, but what girl should I cross?"

"Ah!" was the other's answer, "can't you read? It's Henry Martin and Edith Hartsdale together, so everybody that's voting for Kelly is

voting for the other girl. I don't remember her name, but you'll find it on the ballot."

"Sure!" shrilled another; "that's what we're all doing."

It was exactly as Johnnie himself had voted.

And when the voting was over and the ballots locked up in Mr. Hartley's office to be counted by teachers to prevent the result leaking out, two rival candidates for the highest office in the gift of their schoolmates sought a corner of the school-yard and got their heads together. Johnnie had a paper to exhibit. There were whisperings of debate and happy laughter. And when the boy and girl parted, their mysterious grins and exchanged winks hardly seemed appropriate to rivals.

CHAPTER XXX

VICE AND VIRTUE

It was the afternoon of a hot day in June toward the close of the school term. In the auditorium were assembled the children from the upper grades of Public School 199, Manhattan, to hear the outcome of the two campaigns that had stirred the younger generation for many exciting days.

"Nobody is going to be surprised," was Jack Van Zarn's declaration. "Schuler's got the wrist-watch, and Kelly's President for next term."

Johnnie was not paying attention to his manager; he was experiencing a lapse. The warm weather had brought out the usual crop of short socks on the girls' side. The presidential candidate, having rolled a piece of paper into a hard little "V" and fitted it to a strong elastic band stretched between thumb and forefinger of his left hand, was now drawing back the missile and taking aim at a pair of temptingly fat underpinnings across the aisle. But Jack Van Zarn caught his hand in time.

"For goodness' sake!" whispered the shocked Jack; "cut that out! Are you crazy?"

With a start Johnnie came to himself — or

rather came to that false self that he had tried to be since the gruelling campaign started.

"Gee! but I wisht I was out of it!" groaned Johnnie. It was good-bye forever to a care-free life. Henceforth he would be on a pedestal, unable to move tongue or hand except before a nation. The prospect was appalling. On the other hand, victory was sweet. He mumbled over the speech Jack had prepared: "I am agreeably surprised, but I am too overcome to say much. I appreciate your kindness, and shall endeavor to live up to your expectations."

Jack considered this composition a masterpiece, for he knew there was not a word in it that Johnnie's tongue could maltreat enough to please his most fastidious critics.

Johnnie heard Geo'gia Carter's spokesman remark to Van Zarn: "Don't you be too sure. You would n't join with us, so we voted for Geo'gia and Hen Martin. That's forty votes you lost."

Johnnie looked enviously across at Henry Martin. It was now conceded, even by Martin's most ardent supporters, that Martin was out of the race.

"Wisht I was," mumbled Johnnie to himself.

There was a delay. Johnnie always found delays during an assembly particularly irksome — one cannot take a stretch or a full-sized gape

when on parade. Mr. Hartley had sent for 6 A and 6 B, the classes of the year just below the departmental. There were seven of the classes, or sections, of the two grades, a total of nearly three hundred pupils; and when these non-voting citizens of the Amsterdam Republic crowded into the auditorium, the place was as solid with heads as a sewing-teacher's pin-cushion and the superheated atmosphere was thickly metropolitan.

On the perch along the back of the principal's platform, in the center of the usual row of roosters — the prominent of the neighborhood — sat Mr. William Schuler, the plush watch-case in hand.

"He oughter be ashamed of himself," growled Johnnie to Jack, "and I bet he is. He don't look extra happy up dere, does he? Maybe he sees how it'll look to give his own kid that old tin tick-tick when we all know how he got it."

"He got it fair," declared Jack.

"Did he? I t'ought the idea was to make us get out and hustle. What hard work did Max do to earn that?"

"Don't be a knocker. You should be satisfied. You're President."

"Oh, I don't want the old wrist-watch. I'm glad I sold what I did just for the gov'ment and not for no watch."

The principal arose to address the school. It

was a good chance to talk civics and patriotism; and the old man, as usual, in a few crisp sentences, crystallized the sentiment of that whole roomful, until his little regiment of young Americans would have followed him with a hurrah against the very hell-fires of autocracy.

"The Amsterdam Republic," he went on, "was organized to give you boys and girls a practical lesson in true democracy. You have been given a chance freely to choose your own rulers. These rulers cannot govern in matters which are purely within the province of the teachers, any more than the mayor of this city can overstep the bounds into the jurisdiction of the governor, or any more than the governor can usurp the powers of the Federal Government."

Johnnie lost interest. The subject was too vague and unexciting. Mr. Hartley must have felt that his audience was too anxious over the results of the balloting to listen to a talk on self-government, for he quickly dropped the subject.

"And now for the returns," said he: "Ballots cast, 494. Girls, Edith Hartsdale, 152; Georgia Carter, 342; total, 494. Boys, Henry Martin, 187; John Kelly, 307; total, 494. Miss Georgia Carter has been duly elected President, and Mr. John Kelly Vice-President, of the Amsterdam Republic."

It needed no statistician to explain the result: scattering votes excepted, every one who had voted for John Kelly had voted for Geo'gia Carter, and in addition, the girl had the vote of her own class, whose other vote in retaliation had gone for Henry Martin.

Jack Van Zarn collapsed in his seat. Johnnie sat stunned. So did the school for fully half a minute. Then a decorous clapping commenced among the *élite* on the platform and spread among the children.

Johnnie saw for the first time in his school career a smile on Sally Primton's face. It brought him to his senses.

"Gee whiz!" he exploded, "a skirt President! Would n't that bump your funny-bone?"

Over to the flushed, surprised, happy President-elect walked Master Kelly with a wholesome, unstudied grin.

He held out his hand.

"Shake!" he cried. "You suffragettes put it all over me, and I'm still groggy, but honest to goodness, I'm glad!"

And as he walked back to his seat amid the pandemonium of approval that followed, he crumpled into a wad a piece of home work prepared for Miss Primton and threw it gleefully into Jack Van Zarn's dejected countenance.

"Gee whiz! It's good to be only a Vice!"

"The defeated candidates will escort the victors to seats upon the platform," directed Mr. Hartley.

Johnnie did not care. He was happy and free. A few minutes of the limelight and then, according to the unalterable precedents of history, he could be himself forever.

With a dignified fluttering and many exchanges of politenesses, the notables made room for the boy and girl. It was a bit trying for Johnnie to sit up there with Geo'gia on one side and the District Superintendent of Schools on the other, but it did not faze him. He grinned.

"Before we call for speeches from your new officers," said Mr. Hartley, "we will announce the winner of the Liberty Bond prize. Unfortunately, Mr. Schuler tells me that he is suffering from a severe cold" — Mr. Schuler obligingly gave a sample cough — "so he asks me to make the presentation address." Followed a short summary of the campaign and its totals, with commendation of every one. "Strangely, the two who sold the most bonds are just four hundred dollars apart; and I am pleased to announce that the one who came so near to winning was Mr. Schuler's own son, Max."

Every person in the room sat up in surprise.

"And the one who beat him has already received honors at your hands, The winner of the

wrist-watch, who sold \$13,750 worth of bonds, is John Kelly, Class 7 B."

There was one wild, discipline-breaking yell. Those who had voted for Martin, as well as the 6 A and 6 B youngsters, exercised their lungs fully as much as did Caluchie, Carson, and Van Zarn, for it was a splendid opportunity. Several dismayed teachers cast a wildly hopeful look toward the platform, but the principal gave no sign to check the tumult.

Weak-kneed and almost voiceless, Johnnie rushed to Mr. Hartley's side. "I did n't sell no such wad," he protested in a stage-whisper.

"Oh, yes, you did," declared the smiling old gentleman.

Johnnie eyed Mr. Hartley shrewdly for a minute, then a smile of awakening understanding spread over the boy's face, and he gave the schoolmaster a sly wink. Whether or no the schoolmaster comprehended Johnnie's mental conclusions, the principal certainly returned the wink.

"All right, if you say so," said Johnnie.

"Mr. Schuler will vouch for that total," insisted Mr. Hartley.

Mr. Schuler strained his system to give a cheerful confirmation, and proceeded to put on Johnnie's wrist the wonderful watch — wrong-side up. Johnnie's eyes, roaming over the ap-

plauding school, lit upon Miss Sally Primton at the piano and she was smiling at him!

"I'll wake up in a minute," he concluded ruefully; "but it's sure some dream!"

Mr. Hartley raised his hand. In ten seconds the room was still.

"Now I shall call for a few words from the winner of the Liberty watch, the Vice-President of the Amsterdam Republic, John Kelly."

Both Mr. Schuler and Mr. Hartley retreated, leaving Johnnie to face alone the battery of eight hundred pairs of eyes. The boy's knees shook beneath him. Words had fled. Suddenly flashed upon him the phrases that Jack had prepared for him in anticipation of his becoming President.

"I am agreeably surprised," he gulped huskily, "but I am too overcome to say much. I appreciate your kindness—" and there he stopped.

Down he sat while the audience applauded noisily until Mr. Hartley brought them to order.

"And now," announced the beaming principal, "we shall listen to our President, Georgia Carter."

With all the grace of a grown lady, but with all the naïveté of a child, Geo'gia walked to the edge of the platform.

"You-all have been very kind to me," said she, and in her blue eyes, as they swept over the faces of her schoolmates, there was a look of friendliness that captured.

“Ah ’m happy” — she laughed. “Ah thank you — Ah hope to do so you-all will be proud of me.”

Whereupon every fidgeting little rascal in the big room had a chance to make a racket under the disguise of applause.

But in the midst of it there came a lull. Then all that had gone before was a whisper compared with the ear-splitting pandemonium that broke loose.

Following the gaze of the audience to the right of the platform, Johnnie caught sight of a strapping big form in the olive drab of the army. It was Daniel Parks.

CHAPTER XXXI

EXEUNT

DANIEL PARKS was not wearing the smile of a man who had come seeking the plaudits of admirers; his serious countenance depicted pre-occupation. But to those in the assembly-room of 199, young and old, he was the embodiment of the American Spirit. Here was the type of man who had sprung forward at the first call to lead our millions in the Great Cause.

Mr. Hartley seized Dan by the arm, while the tumult continued unabated.

“Dan, my boy —”

The younger man broke in, “Last night I received your —”

“Yes, yes” — The veteran had no ears for the moment. “You’ll say a few words, won’t you?”

“No, no! I have no time. I’m too deeply stirred to think in connected sentences. I came in answer to your —”

“Wait, please, Dan; just a minute.”

He raised his hand. Again, that silence, a tribute to his power over the children who loved him.

“Boys and girls,” he addressed the school, “Mr. Parks’s stay must be short. His work now

is not to talk, but to act. Let us all stand, at the signal, and while our hearts beat for the man who leaves our classrooms to help train and lead the army of right and justice, let our voices join at his command in the pledge to our flag."

Dan Parks stepped firmly forward.

"School, stand!"

Every boy and every girl sprang erect and still.

"Attention! — Salute!"

The hand of every boy and girl in that packed room came smartly to forehead.

"Pledge!"

Forty score of voices recited: "I pledge allegiance to my flag, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all!"

Miss Primton struck a chord on the piano. The children faced the center aisle. Then came an instant electrification of every boy and girl and man and woman in that room, for Sally Primton, she of the iron hand and the sharp tongue, she who was thought to possess no heart, struck into the stirring strains of "Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! the Boys are Marching!"

And how she played it! There was no doubt, now, where her heart was. The light of determined American womanhood shone on her sharp face. Come weal or woe, war for two years or for twenty, as long as she had life, the spirit that

kept small boys and girls up to the mark would be behind the boys behind the guns.

There was a thrill in her playing that had never been before. From her finger-tips it swept over the room. Up went every youthful head, out stepped every childish foot with a quick, joyous, glad swing. There was a glistening in the eyes of the veteran of '61, and he caught Parks by the arm.

"Dan, Dan!" he cried with feeling. "Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! the *children* marching — the pride and the hope of our race! These are the heirs of the ages. They are the epitome of the living, thinking, and doing of all who have lived great lives, have thought grandly, and have done nobly since God created man in his own image.

"I am an old man, Dan; my race is run. Since Abraham Lincoln died I have moulded in the Public Schools of New York thirty thousand souls. Now in a few days I retire; and you go 'Over There' to make the world safe for these children. Oh, that I had the voice to reach every teacher in this glorious land! Here are jewels so precious that the whole material world is worth nothing in comparison; jewels entrusted to the teachers to be beautified — to be polished and to be placed each in its proper setting.

"The lapidary changes no ruby into a sapphire, no pearl into a diamond, but fits each for the display of its own glory, according to the gift

of beauty bestowed upon it. Let the teacher take these soul gems, living, glowing, shining, glittering, coruscating, each after its own kind, and, with reverent hands, with heart touched with a sense of the infinite pathos of human life, fit them to shine in the diadem of God."

Choked with emotion, the grand old man moved toward the office, still clutching the arm of Dan Parks. Those who were left on the platform had heard much of the impassioned utterance; and they melted away, each caught in the swirl of his own emotions.

The boy and girl still sat on the long settee. Johnnie nudged Geo'gia, and after eager whisperings, the girl glided off the platform and out into the hall beyond; while Johnnie followed Mr. Hartley and Mr. Parks into the principal's ante-room at a respectful distance.

The last child marched through the doorway at the rear of the room. The music ceased. Sally Primton was alone. Through an open window, with unseeing eyes, she gazed at the blue sky, and her lips moved in silent words. Slowly her head drooped forward until it rested in the hollow of her arms against the music-rack.

"I received your telegram," said Dan as he and his former chief reached the privacy of the inner office. "What does it mean?"

"My telegram?" repeated the principal. "What telegram? I sent no telegram."

"Why, here it is:"

Gilfillan has surrendered come and take her yours truly

Charles Hartley

He handed the paper to the principal. Mr. Hartley scowled in perplexity.

"I expected to find her at home," said Dan; "then I hurried right over here. What does it mean?"

"I don't know," admitted the school chief, "unless some cruel practical joker —"

"T ain't no joker," interrupted Johnnie, close behind them, as Geo'gia, smiling expectantly, entered hugging close to the arm of Helen Bouck.

Helen could not conceal the shock at first sight of Dan. A flush spread over her face.

"You sent for me, Mr. Hartley?" she inquired.

An important Johnnie Kelly stepped to the center of the perplexed group.

"Jist hold tight, everybody, till me and Geo'gia spills the beans," he advised.

Nervously he fumbled in his pocket, produced a letter, and presented it to Miss Bouck. She took it, her hand shaking, but quickly a smile spread over her features.

"I don't understand this," said she; "it is not addressed to me."

Mr. Hartley read it; and he, too, laughed as he passed it on to Mr. Parks.

"Some mistake, Johnnie," said the soldier, and he read it aloud:

My dear Mr. Kelly:

Your ultimatum received. I admire your brazen impudence and your great big red-headed nerve. You are a blackmailer; but I am entirely at your mercy. If you tell on me, I'll be pestered for charity for the rest of my life. There is another reason for my surrender. I believe that advertising one's beneficences and patriotism and looking for notoriety when the nation is at war is a contemptible form of profiteering, so I don't want you to tattle. Under the circumstances I hasten for to grant your request. I enclose the surrender you demand. You can read it to see if it is satisfactory and then deliver it yourself. But I warn you for to walk the straight and narrow path, because I will gloat in anticipation over the time when I will have a chance to pay you back in your own coin.

I am, sir

Your brother red-head

Alexander MacLaurin Gilfillan

"Gee horsephat!" exploded Johnnie; "dat's de wrong letter. Here's de one."

The right one was likewise unsealed. Helen took it with a steadier hand than she had the first. The diversion had been a relief.

"Johnnie Kelly," chuckled Mr. Hartley as the young woman perused the second letter, "is that the way you treat your best friend? Do you know

what you have done? Mr. Gilfillan is the man who, with the request that the fact be not published broadcast, sent in to me a big enough subscription to Liberty Bonds to win for you the watch that you now wear on your wrist."

"I'm a nut!" confessed Johnnie, sinking into a chair. "His wad and Sally's five hundred! Gee! I t'ought you only said I sold most bonds jist to take the starch out o' old Schuler."

Helen passed the letter to Dan. And Dan, having read it, handed it over to his beloved chief, as a son would confide in a father.

Johnnie had perused it many times since the four o'clock mail the day before.

My dear Helen [it ran]

I have strong faith in red-headed judgment. Perhaps I have went daft on Johnnie Kelly. He's got me, and I can't explain it. I love him for his heart and his faults, which some of them are like what I have. I can see with *his* eyes and I believe that one Daniel Parks is more of a man than I used to think. If he was n't he could n't have such a hold on a boy like Johnnie is. Helen, the world of to-day is not the world like it was when you left Helderberg such a short time ago and you and I made a certain deal. I see it . . . you should ought to see it. Our treaty — yours and mine — is one that must be scrapped in these enlightened days. Nothing matters now but our nation, its present and its future. My blessing on you for a loyal, steadfast product of the best country on God's earth.

Your sincere uncle

Alex

Mr. Hartley returned the letter to Helen.

"Dan . . . Helen," he took an arm of each, "I fought at Shiloh and the Wilderness. I am the soldier of the past. You, Dan, are the defender of the present. God give you strength and life to 'carry on' through the next few hideous years. And, you, Helen, I see in your eyes where you will be, God bless you. Carry on . . . carry on; and these" — he indicated Johnnie and Geo'gia standing, subdued and impressed, close by — "the care-free children of to-day, will catch up the standard when it falls from your hands."

There were handshakes and good-byes. Geo'gia scampered to class 1 A room for Helen's hat, and out from the walls of 199 went Dan and Helen, while the white-haired principal with moist eye turned to his roll-top desk.

On the topmost step of the visitors' stairway Johnnie Kelly seated himself disconsolately as he heard the slam of the front door three floors below.

"Gee! It's sure goin' to be lonesome now, somethin' fierce!" he groaned.

There was a sound at his side, and he looked up to see Geo'gia weeping into her handkerchief as if her heart would break.

"Cry-baby!" he sneered; "betcher you was in love with him yourself."

“Ah was,” sobbed Geo’gia; “Ah am . . . and with her, too . . . and Ah’m ha-ha-happy.”

“Huh! You look it, *believe ME!*”

Rising, he pulled his cap from his back pocket, rapped it over the banister to remove any dust that might have collected in it, and put it on his head. He shot out his arm as he had seen Dan Parks do, and glanced at his watch — which he had found time to put on right-side up.

“Time to go home, Geo’gia. You’re a pretty good skate, if you *are* a girl. Let’s be pals. I don’t care what the fellers say no more — these is war-times. I ain’t a-scared to walk with you. Come on.”

And from the walls of Public School 199, Manhattan, out into the sunshine, went Geo’gia Carter and Johnnie Kelly.

THE END

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Head of copper, cheek of brass, heart of gold:-that's Johnnie Kelly

Johnnie Kelly

By WILBUR S. BOYER

